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VOLUME 3



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THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF  
AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR  
OF 1914-1918

VOLUME III  
THE A.I.F. IN FRANCE:  
1916





THE  
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE  
IN FRANCE

1916

BY  
C. E. W. BEAN

*With 475 illustrations and maps*

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## PREFACE

COLONIAL historians have been taxed with a tendency to garnish their works with more detail than writers in older countries. If that observation is true—and probably it is—of this volume and its predecessors, the reasons are definite and easily furnished.

First, the limited nature of the field—enabling these books to be written mainly by eyewitnesses of the events and within the lifetimes and recent memories of most of the actors—has made it possible to reconstruct the fighting from the point of view of the front line, and to record with more than usual certainty the play of strains and stresses at the actual point where battles are won or lost. The chief value of national war histories such as these is to show how a people responds to the heaviest of all tests: what strain it will resist; when it will bend or break; how it compares in these respects with others; and what are the elements and signs of its strength and weakness. It also seems desirable to provide the evidence which may perhaps some day help other students to probe for the causes. In war men will exhibit in the sight of all, often a dozen times in a day, feelings and tendencies which might not be visible to their fellows once in an ordinary lifetime. Their allies beside them, and the enemy whom they face, are subjected to similar stress, and from the millions of resulting incidents there may be gleaned data for a comparative test of extraordinary interest and value. The sources from which war histories have sometimes been written—despatches of generals (which often afford only second-hand, or even third-hand, evidence of what actually happened to their troops), second-hand reports composed long after the events, and stories already half-crystallised as legend—may indicate what the leaders thought and intended, but have little authority for the occurrences on the actual battle-front. For the present history the essential data were obtained from those actually engaged, and within a few weeks of most of the events. Thus authentic materials for detailed reconstruction of the actual fighting do in a large measure exist. In the present volume the writer has endeavoured truthfully to

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exhibit the Australian character as evinced under a strain which, at first gentle, suddenly increased at Pozières to terrible intensity, then eased, and in the early winter again suddenly racked the men almost to breaking point. So cruel, indeed, was the test that the human material was suspected by those who best knew it—though not by other onlookers—of having suffered permanent damage. When the volume ends, the stress shows signs of abating; and—though the fears of breakdown are not yet wholly dispelled—there are tokens that nerves and spirits may regain all their former resiliency.

Second, a comparison of the higher reports and despatches on the one hand with the mass of first-hand data concerning the front on the other confirms what the writer's personal observation had already suggested—that despatches written after a fight are rarely accurate in detail; that movements which a leader believes—and states—to have been the result of his orders have very often been made before those orders arrived, their true cause having been accident, the pressure of the enemy, the initiative of some junior officer, or even the tactical sense of the troops themselves. Probably the colonial writer regards more sceptically than those of older countries the despatches both of statesmen and of generals. He is also, perhaps, less likely to be influenced by the assumption—necessary in military operations, but in no degree binding on their historian—that for a commander's decisions the commander alone is responsible. The colonial historian, convinced that the true credit for famous achievements in war, as in politics, lies often with unknown subordinates, endeavours to sift the details until he can lay a just share of praise at the feet of those to whom it is due. In the compilation of the present volume this purpose has been deliberately kept in view. Only by this method have there, for example, been brought to light the desperate fighting on the beleaguered right flank of Fromelles and the critical situation (solved by the boldness of one young leader) in the final attack on Pozières Ridge—events about which the official operation reports were silent, simply because the higher leaders had never heard of them. No blame whatever is to be imputed for this omission; the higher authorities had duties far more



pressing than that of delving into history. But a history of those battles based merely—or mainly—on the official reports would have been a travesty of the truth.

To this twofold desire—to give a true picture of the test of battle, and to distribute the credit as widely as possible among those who deserve it—the particularity of these narratives has been due. The author has, however, endeavoured to prevent mere multiplicity of detail from obscuring its own bearing either on the development of the A.I.F. or on the course of the greater struggle. If the achievement of this aim has been possible, it has only been so because the field was comparatively small. If the writer had had to deal with fifty divisions instead of five, a different method must have been adopted. Indeed, in the next volume of this series—describing the retreat of the enemy to the Hindenburg Line, and the Battles of Bullecourt, Messines, and Ypres (1917)—the method of the present one will be impossible. The story of each of these events, if written on the same scale as that of Pozières, would itself fill more than half the book. The narrative must therefore necessarily be much more general, and a vast amount of incident exhibiting the reaction of Australians to those famous tests must go unrecorded—at least in these pages.

The author's gratitude for constant assistance is especially due to the Director, Acting-Directors, and staff of the Australian War Memorial; to Brigadier-General Sir James Edmonds and the staff of the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence in London; and to Mr. T. H. E. Heyes, who, as the representative of the Australian War Memorial for three years, carried out his researches among the British war records. Suggestions made by Sir James Edmonds have in many places added much to the value of the text. The writer is also deeply indebted to the officials of the Historical Section, French Ministry of War, and to Mr. C. H. Voss, the Australian Trade Representative in Paris, as well as to the Director of the Imperial German Archives at Potsdam, to Captain J. J. W. Herbertson, and to Herr A. Stenger for their unfailing courtesy and constant personal effort towards furnishing material for the French and German sides of the narrative; to the High Commissioner

for Australia in London and his staff; to the officers of the Mitchell Library in Sydney; to Brigadier-General T. H. Dodds, Messrs. W. A. Newman, J. E. Murphy, A. J. Withers, and many others in the Department of Defence. The marginal sketches and maps are by Mr. W. S. Perry.

In addition to books and other publications mentioned in foot-notes, the following works have been consulted:

*Military Operations, France and Belgium*, by Sir J. E. Edmonds; *The World Crisis, 1916-1918*, by the Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill; *The Empire at War, 1914-1918*, by Sir Charles Lucas; *A History of the Great War*, by John Buchan; *Life of Lord Kitchener*, by Sir George Arthur; *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, by Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell; *From Private to Field-Marshal and Soldiers and Statesmen, 1914-1918*, by Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson; *Out of My Life*, by Marshal von Hindenburg; *My War Memories and The General Staff and its Problems*, by General Ludendorff; *French Head-Quarters, 1915-1918*, by Jean de Pierrefeu; *The Story of the Fifth Australian Division*, by Captain A. D. Ellis; *The New Zealand Division, 1916-19*, by Colonel H. Stewart; *The Eighth Division in War, 1914-1918*, by Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Boraston and Captain C. E. O. Bax; *The History of the Twentieth (Light) Division*, by Captain V. E. Inglefield; *The Story of the 29th Division*, by Captain Stair Gillon; *The History of the 35th Division in the Great War*, by Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. Davson; *The Royal Naval Division*, by Douglas Jerrold; *Histories of 251 Divisions of the German Army Which Participated in the War (1914-1918)*; *Forward with the Fifth*, by A. W. Keown; *History of the 10th Battalion, A.I.F.*; *The Story of the Twelfth*, by L. M. Newton; *The Fighting Thirteenth*, by T. A. White; *With the Twenty-Second*, by Captain E. Gorman; *The Red and White Diamond*, by Sergeant W. J. Harvey; *The Blue and Brown Diamond*, by Lieutenant-Colonel W. Dollman and Sergeant H. M. Skinner; *The Fortieth*, by F. C. Green; *The Story of a Battalion*, by W. Devine; *The 8th Australian Field Ambulance on Active Service*, by L. W. Colley-Priest; *The Army Quarterly*; *Chronology of the War*, issued under the auspices of the Ministry of Information.

The author also acknowledges his debt to a great number of eyewitnesses of the events recorded, and to those others who have made available, either directly or through the Australian War Memorial, letters and diaries containing many frank and invaluable narratives.

C. E. W. B.

SYDNEY,

8th August, 1928.

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### CORRIGENDA.

*Page 135, line 22, for (Saxon) read (Württemberg). This division faced the 4th Australian Division south of Ypres in October 1910.*

*Page 260, for 231st Regiment read 231st R.I.R.*

*Page 263, for 230th Regiment read 230th R.I.R.*

*Page 267, for 210th Regiment read 210th R.I.R., and for 231st Regiment read 231st R.I.R.*

*Pages 271, 272, for 229th Regiment read 229th R.I.R.*

*Page 388, line 17, for their read its.*

*Page 403, line 22, for on the extreme left read near Delangré Farm.*

*Page 423, line 21 and footnote 90, the enemy's operation at 10 p.m. is wrongly referred to as the "second" counter-attack. It was the second phase of the first counter-attack.*

*Page 548, line 31, for 157th R.I.R. read 157th I.R.*

*Page 667, line 26 and footnote 53, for 9th Jäger Battalion read 9th Reserve Jäger Battalion.*

*Pages 739, 740 (footnote 26), 742, for 9th Jäger Reserve Regiment read 9th Reserve Jäger Battalion.*

*Page 821, lines 20-21, for 4th Guard Reserve Division read 4th Guard Division.*

## CHRONOLOGY FOR 1916.

(*Italic type indicates events dealt with in this volume.*)

- Jan. 5—Military Service Bill introduced by Mr. Asquith (passed on Jan. 24).  
 „ 8—Withdrawal from Cape Helles completes the Gallipoli evacuation.  
 „ 15—Russians attack the Turks in Transcaucasia.  
 „ 23—Montenegro makes terms with invading Austrians.
- Feb. 15—Fifth Battle of the Isonzo begins.  
 „ 16—Russians take Erzerum.  
 „ 21—Battle of Verdun begins.
- March 1—Germany opens extended submarine-campaign.  
 „ 9—Germany declares war on Portugal.  
 „ 18—Russian offensive in north begins.  
 „ 19—Sir John Maxwell withdrawn from Egypt, leaving Sir Archibald Murray in undivided command.  
 „ 20—*I Anzac Corps begins landing in France.*  
 „ 24—Steamer *Sussex* torpedoed in English Channel.  
 „ 26-28—Inter-Allied conference at Paris.  
 „ 27—British local attack at St. Eloi.
- April 24—Outbreak of the rebellion in Ireland.  
 „ 25—German battle-cruisers raid Lowestoft and Yarmouth.  
 „ 29—Surrender of Kut.
- May 8—Through American protest, Germany modifies submarine campaign.  
 „ 11—German local attack south of the Hohenzollern Redoubt.  
 „ 14—Austrian offensive in the Trentino begins.  
 „ 21—German local attack at Vimy Ridge.  
 „ 25—Great Britain extends compulsory service to married men.
- May 31-June 1—Battle of Jutland.
- June 2—German local attack at Ypres.  
 „ 4—Russian offensive (Brusilov's) begins.  
 „ 5—H.M.S. *Hampshire* mined; Lord Kitchener drowned. Arab revolt breaks out.  
 „ 7—*II Anzac Corps begins to reach France.*  
 „ 10—New Zealand passes Compulsory Service Bill.  
 „ 16—Italian counter-offensive in the Trentino begins.
- July 1—*First Battle of the Somme opens.*  
 „ 4—Russian advance in the Ukraine.

- July 7—Lloyd George becomes Secretary of State for War.  
 „ 19-20—*Battle of Fromelles.*  
 „ 23—*Battle of Pozières opens.*  
 „ 25—The re-formed Serbian Army takes its place on the Salonica front.  
 „ 27—Germans court-martial and shoot Captain C. A. Fryatt.
- Aug. 2—Allied attack in Macedonia begins.  
 „ 4-5—Battle of Romani.  
 „ 6—Sixth Italian offensive on Isonzo launched (Battle of Gorizia).  
 „ 27—Roumania enters the war.  
 „ 28—Italy declares war on Germany.  
 „ 29—Hindenburg (with Ludendorff) replaces Falkenhayn.
- Sept. 13—Struggle over conscription begins in Australia.  
 „ 14—Seventh Battle of the Isonzo begins.  
 „ 15—Renewal of Somme offensive—"tanks" first used. Successful French counter-offensive at Verdun.  
 „ 29—Venizelos establishes a Provisional Government in Crete.
- Oct. 9—Eighth Battle of the Isonzo begins.  
 „ 24—French recapture Fort Douaumont.  
 „ 28—Venizelos Government established at Salonica. Referendum in Australia; conscription rejected.  
 „ 31—Ninth Battle of the Isonzo begins.
- Nov. 11—Raid on Maghdaba (Sinai) by light horse and camel corps.  
 „ 15-16—Inter-Allied conference at Paris.  
 „ 18—*First Battle of the Somme ends.*  
 „ 19—Monastir captured by French and Serbians.  
 „ 22—*3rd Australian Division begins to reach France.*  
 „ 23—Venizelos Provisional Greek Government at Salonica declares war on Bulgaria and Germany.  
 „ 29—Admiral Beatty takes command of the Grand Fleet; Admiral Jellicoe becomes First Sea Lord (Dec. 4).
- Dec. 6—Mackensen takes Bucharest.  
 „ 7—Lloyd George succeeds Asquith as Prime Minister.  
 „ 9—War Cabinet formed in Great Britain. First meeting held.  
 „ 12—Nivelle succeeds Joffre in command of French Armies. Germany issues "Peace" note to Allies.  
 „ 15—Second successful French counter-offensive at Verdun.  
 „ 18—President Wilson's suggestions concerning a Peace conference issued.

There were 38 air raids on England (including 7 on London) during the year.

## CHAPTER I

### PREPARATIONS IN EGYPT—THE DESERT LINE

THE year 1916 opened with the Allies intent upon delivering, in spring or summer, an overwhelming concerted blow against Germany, but with the British Government strongly apprehensive of a Turco-German onslaught upon Egypt. When, in the previous October, Germany had succeeded in opening railway communication with Constantinople, this often-predicted stroke began to be gleefully anticipated by the German press; and, when the British Government decided to withdraw its army from Gallipoli, the defence of Egypt became at once—at least in the opinion of Lord Kitchener—the most pressing matter. His proposal to defend Egypt by striking at Ayas Bay<sup>1</sup> had been rejected. Pressure through Salonica he, like all British military authorities and most members of the Cabinet, held to be quite impracticable without a huge expeditionary force, which would have to contend with the overwhelming difficulties of the lines of communication in that area. “Meanwhile,” he wrote:

the German-announced plans for raising the East against us will proceed without opposition, culminating in the spring.

“With the East then in a blaze,” he added, the projected offensive of the Allies would be greatly weakened; and if, without having improved their position, they had to endure the war throughout the following winter, he feared that some of them might be unable to stand the strain, and that thus the war would be lost.

His own proposal for the defence of Egypt having been rejected, he most unwillingly fell back on that supported by the General Staff in London<sup>2</sup>—that Egypt should be defended on the line of the Suez Canal. The outlines of a definite scheme were laid down after discussion between himself, Admiral de Robeck, Generals Maxwell, Monro, and Birdwood,

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<sup>1</sup> Near Alexandretta. See Vol. II, p. 792.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. II, p. 793. This proposal was originally drafted by Maj.-Gen. Sir C. E. Callwell for Sir Archibald Murray, then Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Callwell, *Experiences of a Dugout, 1914-1918*, p. 79).



and the High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry M'Mahon, and they were telegraphed to the British Government on November 21st or 22nd. This scheme involved the construction of a main-line of defence 12,000 yards on the eastern side of the Canal, and eighty-seven miles in length. It was decided that, in order to garrison this line and also to protect the western border—then strongly threatened by the Arabs of the Sahara—there would be required not only all the troops withdrawn from Gallipoli (who in any case would have to spend some months in Egypt or elsewhere for rest and reorganisation),<sup>3</sup> but also two divisions of Indian cavalry from France, additional forces of infantry and field artillery, numbers of heavy guns, and at least fifteen more companies of engineers. Furthermore, new railways, water-pipes, tugs, and barges would be required.

Rejecting a pointed suggestion from the Government that he himself should stay in Egypt and supervise the work, Kitchener sent out an artillery expert, Major-General Horne,<sup>4</sup> who, besides his recent experience of the Western Front, possessed full knowledge of Kitchener's views and was to assist Maxwell in drawing up the Canal defence scheme. Horne sailed forthwith to Egypt, where with Lieutenant-Colonel Grant,<sup>5</sup> Maxwell's Chief Engineer, he selected the line in the desert east of the Canal. At this time most of the slender force, mainly Indian troops, which had been holding the canal-bank when the Australian contingent first reached Egypt, was still in the same position, but was about to be reinforced by the newly-raised 8th Infantry Brigade, then arriving from Australia. A survey of the new line out in the desert was at once begun by several British engineer companies, which, during December and early January, were joined by three arriving from Australia for the 2nd Division. A few isolated positions, ten miles apart, on the new line were forthwith occupied by small bodies of infantry, one of them,

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<sup>3</sup> See Sir Charles Monro's opinions, quoted in *Vol. II*, p. 785.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. Lord Horne, G.C.B., K.C.M.G. Officer of British Regular Army; commanded XV Army Corps, 1916, First Army, 1916/19; of Stirkoke, Caithness, Scotland; b. Stirkoke, 19 Feb., 1861.

<sup>5</sup> Maj.-Gen. P. G. Grant, C.B., C.M.G.; R.E. Officer of British Regular Army; b. 10 Dec., 1869.

at Gebel Habeita, eight miles from Serapeum, being formed on December 19th by a company of the new 31st Australian Battalion under Major Hockley.<sup>6</sup> The position of these solitary posts in the desert, completely beyond touch except for a telephone wire and the daily visit of a patrol of Indian lancers, was a somewhat anxious one.

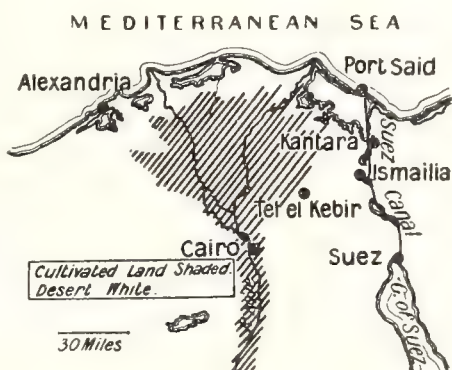
Upon the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac<sup>7</sup> the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was almost immediately transferred from Lemnos to Egypt, the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Charles Monro, informing the War Office of his reasons for doing so, namely:

(1) The climate of Mudros was unsuitable for them:

(2) Egypt was the only place where they could be properly re-fitted, rested, and reorganised:

(3) They were 14,000 short of establishment, and reinforcements including that number were now waiting for them in Egypt.

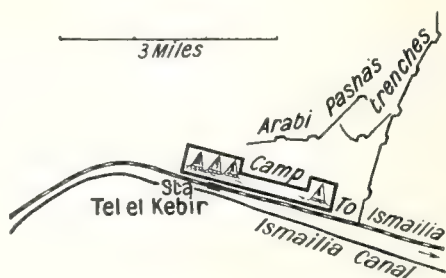
For their concentration a new site was chosen, thirty miles due west of the central reach of the Canal and a few miles east of the eastern edge of the fan-shaped lowlands of the Nile delta. It was here, at Tel el Kebir, on the edge of the desert at the eastern entrance to Egypt, that Arabi Pasha, leader of the Egyptian revolt in 1882, had met and been routed by the British force landed by Lord Wolseley. South of the old battlefield the railway and the sweet-water canal—excavated in order to bring Nile water to the de Lesseps works on the Suez Canal—ran across the desert direct to Ismailia. North of them could still be seen Arabi Pasha's old trenches and breastwork, stretching for three miles across country. The desert in this area was gently undulating, with a hard surface very different from that around Mena, and therefore specially



<sup>6</sup> Maj. (tempy. Lieut.-Col.) R. R. Hockley, D.S.O.; 2nd Pioneer Bn. Foundry manager; of Maryborough, Q'land; b. 1 Feb., 1878. Died of wounds, 20 Sept., 1917.

<sup>7</sup> On 19 and 20 Dec., 1915.

suitable for the encampment and training of troops. The position—thirty miles in rear of the centre of the Canal defence system—was also highly convenient for the encampment of a large reserve. It was, no doubt, also considered that the distance of Tel el Kebir from Cairo—about seventy miles by railway—would to a large extent secure that city from any possible



indiscipline on the part of the Anzac troops, while also shielding those troops from the known dangers of Cairo.<sup>8</sup> The main object, however, was strategical. Kitchener realised throughout that the huge garrison which he was sending to Egypt would be required there only during what he considered to be the critical period—that during which a vast armed invasion of Egypt was possible. This was limited to the short spring season of Sinai; by March the scorching up of the winter waters should render Egypt safe from anything worse than a powerful raid. It followed that the great British force then accumulating, as the divisions from the Dardanelles streamed into Egypt, would in a few months form a reservoir from which the Empire might draw troops for any other front. Its daily arriving fragments were, however, at present in no condition to dovetail, as formed divisions or army corps, into the armies of the Western or other front. None of these divisions had been organised with the full quota of artillery for a division on the Western Front. In the 1st Australian and N.Z. & A. Divisions some of the guns which they had possessed, as well as water-carts and other vehicles, had been retained for use in the last stage of the Evacuation<sup>9</sup> and had been intentionally sacrificed.

<sup>8</sup> The transmission to Australia of Gen. Legge's strongly adverse report (of June 18) on Cairo as a training centre, though much resented by Maxwell (*Vol. II*, p. 423), had caused the Australian Government to urge, on June 22, a removal of the camps. Although, after being referred to Maxwell, this was not further pressed, it was doubtless taken as still expressing the wish of the Commonwealth Government.

<sup>9</sup> See *Vol. II*, pp. 863, 903.



The troops themselves were in some cases seriously worn out and required rest and rebuilding.<sup>10</sup>

When, in the closing week of 1915, the first portions of A.I.F. units, scattered after the Evacuation, began to reach Tel el Kebir, they found camped, on the desert beside the railway, the transport sections from which they had been parted since the beginning of the campaign, but which now, with horses and harness lavishly cared for by the drivers, were awaiting the return of their mates. The troops from Anzac found also that into the camps around Cairo there had of late been pouring another stream of Australians and New Zealanders, reinforcements fresh from Australasia, who were still arriving in large numbers. The source of the influx, which proved to be the main factor determining the subsequent growth of the forces of both Dominions, must here be briefly explained.

Eight months previously, the first news that the Australian and New Zealand contingents had been thrown into the fighting at the Dardanelles had an immediate influence upon recruiting. Almost the first intimation of that event was a casualty list which came through on May 3rd, followed almost daily, week after week, by further lists of killed, wounded, and missing. In Australia at that time no special recruiting campaign had been organised. Volunteers from the country still had to make their way to the capital cities for enrolment, the Defence Department merely accepting those who offered. The only important encouragement to enlist was the news from the front, and especially from the Dardanelles, news which in this hemisphere was then, and during most of the Gallipoli campaign, extraordinarily inaccurate and disconnected, wild rumours from Cairo and Athens largely filling the gap due to the scarcity of authentic and connected narratives. But both the first list of May 3rd and also Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett's magnificent report of the Landing published on May 8th were followed by an increased stream of enlistment, which was maintained for several weeks. At this time Australia had already offered to the British

<sup>10</sup> On the recommendation of the Director of Medical Services all Gallipoli troops were to receive daily, as a temporary measure, a quarter of a pound of bread and of meat in addition to the authorised ration.

Government the three infantry brigades which eventually formed in Egypt the 2nd Australian Division, and—except for the Siege Artillery Brigade and the Naval Bridging Train<sup>11</sup>—the only contingents to be further supplied were the units already oversea. As those units increased, the reinforcement drafts grew, and at that stage they amounted to 3,277 (nearly the strength of an infantry brigade) each month.

Early in June the more well-informed and eager elements of the Australian people began to be dissatisfied with the rate of recruiting. It was not that it showed serious decrease, though this was alleged. But, first, the Australians at the front were in action; second, the policy, which unfortunately had been adopted in British as well as foreign *communiqués*, of exaggerating successes and minimising reverses was no longer producing universal optimism. The general confidence that the British and French forces and the "Russian steam-roller" would secure an early victory was being roughly shocked. The attempt to force the Dardanelles, launched with such a fanfare of somewhat bombastic publicity, was obviously held up; the colossal struggle in France and Belgium was apparently at a deadlock; the only movement was in Russia, where the "roller" had ceased to move forward and the mighty counter-advance of the Germans was just beginning. A fair proportion of Australians was for the first time beginning to realise the gigantic nature of the task ahead, and to recognise—with something of a shock—that, unless each man put his own shoulder to it, that task might never be accomplished. Consequently, although the provision of Australia's monthly draft did not yet call for very large numbers, and even those could hardly be supplied with rifles by the Small Arms Factory at Lithgow, there was heard for the first time a certain amount of bitter talk about "shirkers." Both press and public also began to point to the want of an active organisation for the encouragement of recruiting.<sup>12</sup> Towards the end of June recruiting meetings

<sup>11</sup> See Vols. II (p. 424) and IX (pp. 389-405, 574-6, 610-2).

<sup>12</sup> Recruiting was still left by the Government entirely in the hands of the Defence Department, which made certain attempts to stimulate it. Senator Pearce, the Minister for Defence, who at this time was bearing a very heavy share of the work of organisation for war, appealed for a renewed effort, the minimum height-limits for recruits being about the same time lowered by an inch, and in June by another inch, that is, to 5 ft. 2 in. The original limits—height, 5 ft. 6 in.; chest, 34 in.; age, 19-38—had been altered in February 1915 to 5 ft. 4 in., 33 in., and 18-45 respectively.

were spasmodically organised in Sydney and elsewhere by other than government authority, though without greatly affecting the inflow. Such was the position when the Australian Government, in reply to an inquiry of its own asking "if as many men as can be raised will be accepted" (even without rifles), received on June 18th a cablegram from the British Government containing the message: "Every available man that can be recruited in Australia is wanted." This was announced by Senator Pearce at a meeting in Melbourne on June 22nd. He frankly stated his own opinion that things were not going well on any of the fronts, and asked: "Have we done all we can do?"

There followed a period of energetic action, in which the Government was prompted and encouraged by all parties, and not least keenly by some of the Labour members. In Victoria, where recruiting was especially backward, a campaign was at once planned. The Federal Government decided to offer the infantry of an additional division<sup>13</sup> or its equivalent—a new brigade together with double drafts of reinforcements (that is to say, 10,526 instead of 5,263)<sup>14</sup> for each of the months of October and November. True to the War Office policy at this stage, the British Government accepted the increased reinforcements and also one new brigade. The Federal Government further decided to estimate systematically the effort of which Australia was capable. In order to discover the number of men eligible for service, there was introduced on July 15th a bill for the immediate taking of a "war census."

It was during these days that the recruiting campaign launched by the State Parliamentary Committee of Victoria swept like a fire through that state. "The war is not going well," said the appeal issued under the signatures of Donald Mackinnon (Liberal Attorney-General and Minister for Railways), Francis Grenville Clarke (Liberal member of the

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<sup>13</sup> Three infantry brigades, with brigade transport, field ambulances, and a divisional signal company. The artillery, engineers, and headquarters of a division were not offered, apparently because there would have been a difficulty in immediately supplying them or training them. All except the last-named were, however, shortly afterwards raised in Australia for the 2nd Division forming at the end of July in Egypt.

<sup>14</sup> The monthly quota had been increased since May in consequence of the sailing of the brigades of the 2nd Division. Before the double reinforcements now offered were despatched, the quota had been still further increased, and the number actually sent was not 10,526 but 11,279.



Legislative Council), and John William Billson (Labour member of the Legislative Assembly). "There is no need for panic, but there is urgent need for action." For two weeks speakers of all parties and creeds manned the platforms; in a fortnight's campaign 13,809 men—and in the whole month about 21,000—were enlisted in Victoria.<sup>15</sup>

The campaign in Victoria was followed by similar efforts in other States. In New South Wales a campaign, commencing on August 10th, produced disappointing results, and a second was therefore organised for October, during which time the State Parliament adjourned. These special efforts, though their results did not approach those of Victoria, evoked heavy recruiting, as is shown by the following figures:

	April.	May.	June.	July.	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Q'land ..	772	1,069	1,267	2,197	3,013	3,569	2,417	2,017
N.S.W.	3,482	5,654	5,279	8,961	12,991	6,911	3,797	5,880
Vic. ..	1,201	1,735	3,381	21,698	3,983	2,331	1,531	1,429
S. Aust.	360	1,062	1,394	1,453	2,705	1,651	1,020	607
W. Aust.	208	689	806	1,485	1,903	1,385	785	961
Tas. ..	227	317	378	781	1,119	724	364	336
Total	6,250	10,526	12,505	36,575	25,714	16,571	9,914	11,230

Thus, as a result of the first enthusiastic organised campaigns, the Australian training camps were filled to overflowing, the numbers being ample to provide the ordinary monthly reinforcements, the artillery and other specialist units now forming for the 2nd Division, the new (8th) infantry brigade, and the large double contingent of reinforcements (further increased to 11,279 each month) in October and November. All were promptly sent forward and arrived in Egypt close upon each other's heels about the end of the year. The monthly average of the numbers in the camps in Australia, which had risen from 16,424 in June to 73,963 in October, was by this clearance reduced again in November to about 50,000.

<sup>15</sup> By 22 July, 1915, Victoria, from having been at the bottom of the list of recruiting-averages, was at its head. The percentage of males between 18 and 45 who had by that date been enlisted in the several States was—

Victoria ..	..	..	..	..	9.92
South Australia ..	..	..	..	..	9.56
Western Australia ..	..	..	..	..	8.66
Tasmania ..	..	..	..	..	7.71
Queensland ..	..	..	..	..	7.52
New South Wales ..	..	..	..	..	6.60



By that month, however—although false hopes had for a week or more been raised by over-optimistic official reports of the Loos and Champagne offensives—the news from the front was darker than ever. Hamilton had been recalled from the Dardanelles. Germany had driven in the Russian armies, cleared a path to Constantinople, crushed and overrun Serbia, and completely held up the great and costly offensive in France. The awakening of the Australians to the truth had rapidly developed, and at this stage the head of the Government—the upright and respected Labour leader, Andrew Fisher—was appointed High Commissioner in London in place of Sir George Reid, the Prime Ministership passing (with fairly general approval) on October 27th to the intense dynamic personality of William Morris Hughes. On October 5th General Birdwood, in view of the very heavy rate of casualties in Gallipoli, asked that the scale of reinforcements from Australia and New Zealand should be increased, and that in the case of the infantry, light horse, engineers, and part of the artillery the drafts sent monthly to reinforce each battalion, regiment, or company should be equal to twenty per cent—one fifth—of the whole strength of each unit.<sup>16</sup> The adoption of this specially high scale for Gallipoli reinforcements, which was of course agreed to, would involve an increase of the normal monthly draft—at that time about 5,300—to 9,331. Mutterings had already been heard of the possible need for conscription—a measure which now seemed imminent in England, and which was, some believed, inevitable in Australia. The subject had been mooted in the Senate on August 20th;<sup>17</sup> and Sir William Irvine had pronounced in favour of compulsion. It is true that Andrew Fisher had, on September 25th, informed a deputation of his irrevocable opposition, and that three months later he told the press in Paris—

There are no political parties in Australia now. . . . The Labour Party has never taken up any stand different from the rest of the country. There has never been any question of conscription. . . .

<sup>16</sup> In the artillery this high rate was to apply to gunners only. That for medical units was to be increased to 7 per cent.; for other services the rate remained 2½ and 1½ per cent.

<sup>17</sup> On the motion of Senator Bakhap.

This, at the moment, represented the true position. Nevertheless, when Hughes became Prime Minister, there existed a wide recognition of the need for Australia's full effort—which would, of course, necessarily involve putting the system of voluntary recruiting to its extreme test. A month after Hughes assumed the Prime Ministership, the returns from the War Census were practically finalised by the Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics, and figures were thus provided by which he could estimate Australia's probable capacity for effort. The country was then maintaining at the front or on the way thither an effective force of about 60,000 men. To provide and support this force there had thus far been enrolled 166,000, of whom nearly 100,000 had already been sent oversea. The interim returns of the census now showed that, of men between the ages of 18 and 60, there were—according to the statistician's classification, but not, of course, that of the medical authorities—618,000 still eligible for enlistment. Of these, 244,000 were single and 361,000 married.

On November 25th, immediately after the publication of these returns, the Government made the unexpected, but, on the whole, welcome announcement that, "after very careful consideration of the present outlook," it had offered to send to the front, in addition to the monthly quota of "9,500" reinforcements, a new force of 50,000 men.<sup>18</sup> Although no detailed explanation was given, the offer really implied that the Government had formed the opinion that Australia was capable of maintaining at the front an effective force of 110,000.<sup>19</sup> Inasmuch, however, as the departure of the 2nd Division's artillery had practically drained Australia of guns and artillery instructors, no artillery could be included in the offer. Moreover high commanders and staffs were no longer locally obtainable. But, in order that the new force might be readily organised on arrival oversea into three additional divisions identified with Australia, the offer was made in the form of nine infantry brigades, each with its signal section,

<sup>18</sup> The reinforcements to keep up this 50,000 were also specifically promised in a subsequent telegram of Nov. 26.

<sup>19</sup> The equivalent of nearly six infantry divisions. The force eventually maintained—although the forecast of recruiting was not fulfilled—was, roughly, five infantry divisions and the greater part of two cavalry divisions.

transport, field ambulance, and engineers. It was suggested that, if this force were to be organised in three divisions, the British authorities should utilise, as far as possible, Australian commanders and staffs, who could be selected from the force in Egypt. It was added that no artillery could be provided, and that, although the troops sent would be trained, no rifles or machine-guns could be sent with them.<sup>20</sup> The present offer, it was explained, would bring Australia's total contribution by the following June "to something like 300,000 men."

In framing these measures the intention of the Government was that Australia should have at the front its full strength in time to offer full assistance when the hour for a supreme Allied effort arrived. The Australian Cabinet appears to have had no definite knowledge of the plans of the Allies, but it was judged probable that they would be ready for a supreme offensive by June, 1916.<sup>21</sup> It was the firm conviction of W. M. Hughes that the resources of the Allies were overwhelming, if they were properly organised. The present effort was an attempt to organise the strength of Australia, and he accordingly proposed to make through the post-office a personal appeal to every man in the eligible groups between the ages of 18 and 44. Local recruiting committees were formed, and a continuous recruiting campaign by parliamentary and local committees was for the first time launched throughout the Commonwealth.

It was the flood of reinforcements resulting from the earlier State campaigns—but not yet of those derived from this new Australia-wide effort—which was flowing into Egypt at the time when the divisions from Anzac returned thither. Those divisions were now grouped as follows. The 1st and 2nd were concentrating in the growing camp at Tel el Kebir, where the units, which at first had to sleep under their transport waggons or water-proof sheets, were now housed

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<sup>20</sup> The whole available supply of these weapons was required for training troops in the Australian camps.

<sup>21</sup> The popular notion was that the winter of 1915-16 and the ensuing spring would be the crucial time. "If the enemy is not more or less broken well before this time next year," said a leading Australian newspaper discussing this offer, "the outlook for the Allies will be a dreary one indeed."

in a spacious tented camp. In similar but rather greener surroundings, at Moascar<sup>22</sup> junction near Ismailia, the New Zealand and Australian Division was assembling. The troops, returning to within reach of the almost forgotten comforts and pleasures of civilisation, and with overflowing arrears of pay to their credit, were somewhat disappointed at finding themselves camped so far from Cairo. Every day two per cent. of the men in each unit were given two days' leave to Cairo. The older troops were becoming accustomed to the inevitable disappointments of warfare, but there occurred a certain amount of breaking out of camp, and overstaying of leave was fairly common. The latter offence did not argue any very criminal intent, most of the men being quite ready and willing to pay for a slight extension of their holiday. Wise commanders for the most part recognised this fact. For example, Lieutenant-Colonel Gellibrand, then commanding the 12th Battalion, when some of these cases were brought before him, used to surprise the truant by asking: "Well—have you had a good time?" "Yes, sir." "Did you enjoy yourself thoroughly?" "Yes, sir." "Of course you don't object to paying for it?" "No, sir." There would follow a fine or other punishment, which, though sometimes moderately severe, was accepted in the spirit in which it was given. On the other hand, British officers, unaccustomed to dealing with the independent and well-hardened types which composed a very large part of the Australian force, were incommoded and even shocked by overcrowding and occasional rowdiness in the trains and—though less frequently—in Cairo itself.

Such trouble was not confined to the men. It was also noticeable that a few officers of a certain type, who had fought their way to the front at Anzac, now, as soon as strong drink was again obtainable, tended to break down, and had gradually to be eliminated. There was emerging, however, a particularly fine set of keen young regimental leaders, such as O. G. Howell-Price of the 3rd, and Scott and Simpson<sup>23</sup> of the 4th,<sup>24</sup> and these immediately and with fiery

<sup>22</sup> Arabic for "camp."

<sup>23</sup> Maj. (tempy. Lieut.-Col.) A. J. Simpson; 56th Bn. Articled law clerk; of Hunter's Hill, N.S.W.; b. Marwood, North Devon, Eng., 9 March, 1888.

<sup>24</sup> Each of these officers was about this time acting in temporary command of his battalion. Howell-Price was 26 years, Scott 24, and Simpson 27.



energy plunged their "rusty" and depleted units into the heavy tasks of training and reorganisation. Godley, White, and the corps staff, arriving in Cairo on January 3rd and taking up their headquarters at Ismailia some days later, at once sketched out a programme of progressive training. This was to occupy three weeks—the length of time which, in the absence of definite instructions, they assumed to be available for recuperation. By the end of January the corps was to be rendered complete in men, equipment, and training.

Certain reinforcements had already been received by some Australian units at Lemnos; 5,000 more were now absorbed from the Australian and New Zealand Training Dépôt at Cairo,<sup>25</sup> as were three further instalments, comprising another 5,500, during the rest of the month. The New Zealand units also absorbed several thousand. The three weeks' training was perforce largely elementary, but it included night operations, Godley insisting that these must be carried out at least twice weekly, and that the men must be trained to move and work with facility in the dark—a wise precaution to which many officers and men subsequently looked back as their first useful experience in night-guiding. At the same time the Anzac units came, practically for the first time, within range of the great system of training-schools, which was already beginning to play a recognised part in the maintenance of all British armies. In Egypt schools were organised by the battalions and other units, by the brigades, by the divisions, by the headquarters of the Mediterranean Force, and by Maxwell's Egyptian headquarters. These provided short training courses not only for almost every sort of specialist but also for young officers and N.C.O's.<sup>26</sup> About 1,000 Australian officers and men were at this stage sent to various courses at the Imperial School of Instruction which had been established by Maxwell at Zeitoun, and in which (since a great proportion of the students had been coming for higher instruction from the Australian Training Dépôt) about half of the instructors were now Australian.

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<sup>25</sup> See Vol. II, pp. 410-13.

<sup>26</sup> Bombers (then called grenadiers) and machine-gunners were at this time mostly trained in the courses at battalion or brigade H.Q., the instructors—officers and N.C.O's—first receiving higher instruction at the machine-gun school of the M.E.F. at Ismailia, or at the Imperial School of Instruction at Zeitoun.

Besides the three infantry divisions at Tel el Kebir and Moascar, the 8th Brigade and the new field companies on the Canal, and the mass of reinforcements—including the newly-arrived artillery for the 2nd Division at Cairo—there were in Egypt two other important bodies of Australian troops. At Alexandria there had been stationed during the Gallipoli campaign the whole of the Australian horse-transport. Each company of the “train,” or transport, comprised two classes of men: the “supply” personnel—usually clerks—who were specially trained in issuing and checking stores, and the transport personnel—usually a fine type of up-country Australian accustomed to horses—who looked after and drove the animals and waggons. These two portions of the transport had generally been separated from each other during the Dardanelles campaign: most of the “supply-sections” were sent to work at the Anzac supply-dumps, while the horse-transport, though also sent forward before the Landing and again before the August offensive, had been returned shortly afterwards without disembarking, there being no employment for horse waggons at Anzac. On the return of the divisions from Gallipoli, the horse-transport of the battalions had rejoined its various units; the train of the 2nd and N.Z. & A. Divisions, and the Reserve Park, or emergency transport, of the 1st Division, were becoming fully employed in carrying and distributing supplies for their own and other divisions or for portions of the Cairo and Alexandria garrisons. On the other hand the “mounted” portion of the train of the 1st Division had in the middle of November been detached by Maxwell to form the transport of a composite force which had been hurriedly improvised and despatched against the Senussi tribes, who were then threatening to descend upon Alexandria and the rest of Egypt from the Libyan Desert. This force, which included British infantry, cavalry, and horse artillery, was also accompanied by an improvised mounted regiment formed from three squadrons of light horse reinforcements, and by a hastily organised section of Australian signallers. It was also joined at later stages by part of the newly raised Rifle Brigade from New Zealand, and by the South African Infantry Brigade.

The desert operations of this force, in which the bush-bred drivers of the train played no unimportant part, are narrated in *Appendix No. I.*<sup>27</sup>

Another important section of the Anzac force in Egypt was that of the light horse and mounted rifles, which, though they had served on foot with the divisions in Gallipoli, were on their return diverted to special camps around Cairo. The threat to Egypt from both borders had caused Maxwell to look forward anxiously for the return both of these and of the yeomanry from the Dardanelles. The War Office had therefore already provisionally decided that the yeomanry and the four dismounted Anzac brigades should at once be re-mounted and re-formed into a cavalry force of two divisions. This decision was known only to the higher staff; but the 1st Light Horse Brigade, arriving on December 28th after its long heavy service as infantry, and being ordered to draw full mounted equipment and be ready to ride out within forty-eight hours, was filled with delight at the recovery of its beloved horses. Within three days the 3rd Regiment had actually left for the Wady Natrun, an oasis area some forty miles north-west of Cairo. The rest of the brigade followed a few days later. The other Anzac mounted brigades were for the present retained in camps near Cairo, engaged in refitting and training, the 4th Light Horse Brigade being still split up and serving with the other units. At this juncture a camel corps, destined to serve beside the light horse with great distinction, was also being formed, mainly from volunteers from the Australian divisions.

There were thus in Egypt the following Anzac forces:

- (1) The 1st and 2nd Australian and the N.Z. & A. Divisions, training at Tel el Kebir and Moascar.
- (2) The 2nd and 3rd Light Horse and the N.Z.M.R. Brigades near Cairo, and the 1st Light Horse Brigade detached on the western frontier.
- (3) The horse-transport—part with the Anzac divisions, part at Cairo and Alexandria, and part with the Western Frontier Force.

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<sup>27</sup> See also Vol. XII, plates 573-4.

- (4) The newly-arrived 8th Australian Infantry Brigade, and the 5th, 6th, and 7th Field Companies<sup>28</sup> on the Suez Canal. There was also part of the then-arriving New Zealand Rifle Brigade with the Western Frontier Force.
- (5) At General Spens's "Anzac Training Dépôt" at Cairo, 30,000 Australian and possibly 6,000 New Zealand reinforcements, together with the artillery for the 2nd Division.
- (6) The personnel of the Australian Intermediate Base under Colonel Sellheim, hospital staffs, and men in hospitals and convalescent homes.

At this juncture there occurred several changes of the highest importance. The first was the arrival on January 11th—the day after the completion of the Helles evacuation—of a new commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, to which the divisions for the defence of the Canal still belonged. This change was the result of others, still more important, initiated by the British War Council during the welcomed absence of Lord Kitchener at the Dardanelles. The mission had barely begun before the War Council—now reduced practically to Asquith, Balfour, and Lloyd George—decided, without informing Kitchener, to recall Sir John French, the British Commander-in-Chief in France, whose position had been made untenable by the failure of the Loos offensive. The command was offered instead to Sir Douglas Haig of the First Army, who was known to be a skilled, hard-fighting, and hard-working soldier. There was in the British Army in France one other figure of outstanding strength, Sir William Robertson, at one time Commandant of the Staff College at Camberley, and a man who, having originally enlisted in the ranks, had risen to be Chief of the General Staff of the British Expeditionary Force. To him the War Council—probably expecting that Kitchener would remain in the East and that Lloyd George would take his place at home—intended to offer the position of Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London. Kitchener,

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<sup>28</sup> Then numbered 4th, 5th, and 6th. See *Vol. II*, p. 806.



upon his unexpected return, strongly urged Robertson to accept; but the latter refused to do so except upon conditions which would ensure that orders to the British commanders-in-chief in the field and reports from them came directly to and from himself and not Kitchener. He further stipulated that, while the War Council (of which Kitchener was a member) should determine high policy and select the leaders, all expert advice concerning operations must come, not from the Secretary of State, Kitchener, but from the General Staff through its chief. After a long discussion, and a tussle of strong wills, Kitchener agreed, and Robertson was brought to London. To make way for him Sir Archibald Murray,<sup>29</sup> who since September had been directing with increasing success the work of the General Staff,<sup>30</sup> must be transferred to some other position. A suitable vacancy existed through the transfer of Monro from the command of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force to the First Army in France in place of Haig. Although, however, Murray was being sent to defend Egypt from the Turks—hitherto part of Maxwell's responsibility — Kitchener insisted, against Robertson's urgings, upon leaving Maxwell in control of all troops in Egypt except the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, and in charge of that country's western frontier.

The commencement of Robertson's control in London and of Murray's in Egypt had certain instant effects upon the A.I.F., as well as upon the British forces. Both men were from the Western Front, and both were convinced that only on that front could the struggle be in any way decisive. Their policy was therefore that Britain should send to France every division except the minimum required for safety elsewhere. The instructions given to Murray specifically laid down that his troops in Egypt were not merely meant for the defence of the Canal but as "a general strategical reserve for the whole Empire."

Nevertheless it was considered to be within the bounds of possibility that the Turks might concentrate 250,000 men

<sup>29</sup> General Sir Archibald J. Murray, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O., p.s.c. G.O.C. in Chief, E.E.F., 1916/17; Aldershot, 1917/19. Officer of British Regular Army; b. Sutton, Surrey, Eng., 21 April, 1860.

<sup>30</sup> Murray's influence was, however, undoubtedly limited by Kitchener's overpowering weight with his colleagues and with the people.

for an invasion of Egypt, and there were many signs of such preparation. Upon Murray's arrival in Cairo, therefore, his first attention was necessarily given to the problem of defending the Canal. At that time the supervision of the whole of the Canal garrison had been taken over from the old Canal Defence Staff at Ismailia by General Godley and the Anzac staff. This measure was merely temporary, designed to fill the time while the three Anzac divisions were training and the other seven divisions from Gallipoli still arriving or being re-equipped.<sup>31</sup> The 31st Division, specially sent from England, was then stationed on the Canal. The transfer of the 14th and 46th Divisions from France to Egypt, which had been ordered, was countermanded by the War Office, part of the 46th, which was then arriving, being immediately shipped back. A force of heavy artillery was being supplied from England. This was to include—in answer to a request previously sent by Birdwood—the two batteries of regular Australian artillerymen which had during the winter been billeted at Taunton.<sup>32</sup> Murray should thus, when all had arrived, have eleven infantry and two cavalry<sup>33</sup> divisions, besides a weak division of Indian troops. Ultimately it turned out that one of the mounted divisions was not, at this stage, formed; that a large part of the heavy artillery, including the Australian, was sent to France instead; that some of the Territorials were lent to Maxwell; and that the last of the Gallipoli divisions, though these troops poured into Alexandria daily, did not reach Egypt till the end of February, by which time some of the others were already leaving. Moreover all of these required re-equipment, as did those from Anzac. Nevertheless Murray would shortly be able to dispose of a very large force, for which four army corps staffs were presently available, namely, those of the VIII, IX, and A. & N.Z. Corps from Gallipoli, and a new staff—that of the

<sup>31</sup> The 13th, 53rd, and 54th Divisions were already in Egypt. The Royal Naval Division was to be retained for the present in the Ægean Islands. The 29th, 42nd, and 52nd Divisions, which had just evacuated the final position on Gallipoli, were arriving at Alexandria. The 11th was leaving Lemnos for Egypt.

<sup>32</sup> The people of Taunton, hearing that Australians were coming thither during the cold months, themselves offered to receive them in their houses. A firm friendship appears to have sprung up, and a number of Australian artillerymen are said to have eventually married Taunton girls.

<sup>33</sup> See p. 15.

XV Corps—specially formed under General Horne to take charge of the Northern Sector of the Canal.

Murray found that, although the Canal Defence Scheme had been drawn up, little actual progress had yet been made with it. The Canal front had, since 1914, been divided into three sectors, which were at that stage thus defended: the Northern Sector (Port Said-Kantara) by the 31st Division, specially sent from England; the Central (near Ismailia) by the new 8th Australian Brigade and certain Indian troops; the Southern (Bitter Lakes-Suez) by the 10th Indian Division. The new defence-line in the desert was still only being surveyed, but the construction of roads, railways, and water-supply system was already being undertaken with native labour. The whole task was still controlled by Colonel Grant, Maxwell's Chief Engineer, assisted by Major-General H. V. Cox, formerly the commander of the Indian brigade at Anzac, whom Maxwell had appointed as Director of Works.

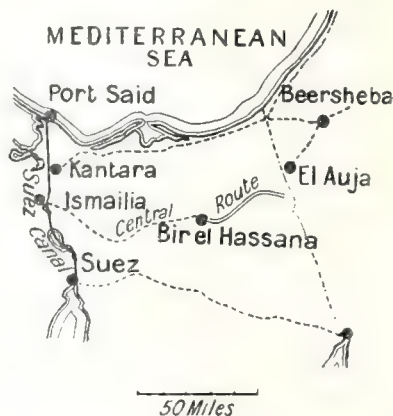
During this time, chiefly by means of Arab agents who were constantly travelling across the Sinai Desert,<sup>34</sup> G.H.Q. was keeping a close watch upon the Turks. These were known to have assembled some 13,000 men at their railhead at Beersheba near the Palestine border. From this point both railway and road were being pushed forward, with the apparent intention of crossing Sinai by the central route which had been used by Djemal Pasha's force in the previous year.<sup>35</sup> Large gangs had been working on the road, which had now reached Bir el Hassana in the mountains of Sinai, a third of the way across the desert. There were stated to



<sup>34</sup> It was realised that some of them were almost certainly receiving payment from both sides.

<sup>35</sup> See Vol. I, 1st edn., pp. 147-52.

be 4,000 Turks at this place, and 9,000 at El Auja, seventy miles farther back.<sup>36</sup> About January 19th several reports indicated that greater activity on the enemy's part had begun. According to these, five train-loads of troops were arriving daily at Beersheba, and the Turkish army was to begin marching towards the Canal in fifteen days. Although Murray expected that the chief invasion, if it came, would be along the northern route, he could not ignore the danger. The line of the Canal defences in



the desert, though roughly surveyed, could not be dug until the divisions moved forward to occupy it. Murray was naturally anxious for the work to begin; and, by his orders, on January 23rd and 24th—a week before the expiration of the twenty-one days allotted for training—the A. & N.Z. Army Corps, still under Godley, began to move to the Canal. Yet their training, though elementary, had been fairly thorough. Meanwhile those who had been detached to the army schools remained to finish their courses, in which they were showing the same outstanding keenness and ability to learn which afterwards, in the training schools in France, came to be the recognised mark of oversea troops.<sup>37</sup>

To take up the front line in the desert the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions were chosen, the N.Z. & A. being left training at Moascar. It was suspected, probably with justification, that the reason for this choice was Murray's desire to remove the Australians as far as possible from Cairo and to occupy their energy with hard work. In the week following his arrival Murray had formed concerning Australian troops strong opinions, which, though afterwards obviously much modified, had a marked influence upon events.

<sup>36</sup> These estimates proved to be exaggerated.

<sup>37</sup> For example—in No. 6 course at the machine-gun school at Ismailia (the only one of that date of which the detailed results have been preserved) 39 officers and N.C.O's took part. Of 8 New Zealanders, 5 were marked "very good," and all did extra work in their leisure time; of 12 Australians, 6 were marked "very good," and 10 did extra work; of 19 British officers and N.C.O's, 2 were marked "very good," one "an excellent officer," and 7 did extra work.



Unlike the widely experienced Maxwell, Murray impressed those Australians who came in touch with him as being a British officer of that cold, scholarly, and somewhat exclusive type with which the smart appearance of troops, neatness of uniform, and punctilious ceremonial both on parade and in the streets, weighed most heavily as signs of their military worth. He came straight from the hushed corridors of the War Office into surroundings which perceptibly shocked him, and of which two days before his arrival, a British staff officer had written:

It may be noted as typical of the very undesirable state of affairs now existing in Cairo, where crowds of idlers in military uniform throng the streets from morning to night, that this evening—the final night of the evacuation of Cape Helles—there was a dance held at the hotel at which the C. in C. (Monro) and staff of the Mediterranean Force were staying.

Although the 30,000 Australian reinforcements in Cairo camps and the veterans on leave from their divisions were not mainly responsible for the dancing, they certainly were for the crowding; and the fact that they were often most untidily belted and buttoned, and took no special heed of passing officers or indeed of anything but their business or pleasure of the moment; that minor brawls and unpleasant incidents of which Maxwell himself spoke very strongly had occurred; that men of any rank, if the desire took them, freely entered the lounges of the two great hotels which custom reserved for officers, drank in the same bars, and had even caused an occasional “scene” under the gilded ceiling which for a few days housed G.H.Q.—these conditions were, to any man of Murray’s nature and upbringing, utterly abhorrent. The more serious offences in Cairo were by no means all due to the troops of the A.I.F., but the Australian commanders recognised that “a small section” was bringing blame upon the whole force. Leave was consequently cut down; Sheppard’s and the Grand Continental Hotels were placed out of bounds except for officers. On January 20th Murray issued a well justified appeal to all his troops, pointing out that the time for the serious task of reorganising the divisions was very short, and expressing his hope

that everyone will now be so employed in training himself for war that the sight of large numbers of officers and men walking about the streets and sitting about in hotels and cafés at all hours of the day with apparently nothing to do will be a thing of the past.

It was at this juncture that the Australian divisions were ordered to the Canal front. The senior officers and staff had already visited the positions to be occupied, and the Anzac engineers had for some time been in charge of the work which, as has already been explained, consisted of two parts—the laying out of the defence lines (to be dug by the troops), and the construction (mainly by native labour) of roads, railways, and pipe-lines leading to those desert lines from the several bridge-heads on the Canal. Of these bridge-heads, or bases, there were ten in all, but only two (Ferry Post and Serapeum) in the Anzac sector. At most of them there were to be provided the following: on the west bank, a siding for the existing railway; on the waterway, one or more floating bridges which could be opened to let ships pass; and, on the eastern bank, a landing place, reservoir, dépôt of supplies, and also a road, a 2 ft. 6 in. railway, and a pipe-line leading eastward to some point not far behind the front lines, where all three would branch north and south, the road and pipe-line being continued by smaller roads and pipes, and the railway by a light “Decauville” tramway.<sup>38</sup>

Murray had ordered that, although subordinate commanders were responsible for planning their defence line in detail, they must follow the general line selected by General Horne and Colonel Grant, and must adhere to the principles laid down in a circular specially written by Grant. This set forth the latest theories of defence, based on the experience of the Western Front, and in particular ordered that trenches must not be sited, as formerly, on a forward slope with the notion of giving their garrison a commanding view and field of fire.

In siting fire trenches, the following must always be borne in mind. . . . A short field of fire to the immediate front . . . is sufficient to stop an assault. . . . Concealment from enemy's artillery is of first importance.

“A good field of fire” should not be sought for, as this necessarily meant that the trenches could be seen by the enemy and “overwhelmed by accurate artillery fire.”

High ground falling towards the enemy is to be avoided, owing to the danger of artillery fire. . . . It will frequently be found that in the Suez Canal zone the most suitable location for fire trenches is at the rear edge of a plateau.

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<sup>38</sup> A light railway in ready-made lengths of rails and sleepers.

The front was not to be continuous, but would be held in posts, the essential for safety being that each post should be able to support those on either side of it, and that openings between should be covered by fire.

From the first it appeared to some thoughtful officers that most of these principles—based on the power of the German artillery—though all-important in France, were very much over-stressed in Grant's circular, since of all defensive positions the Suez Canal line was one of the least likely to be troubled with heavy artillery. The chance of more than a very few big enemy guns being brought to Palestine and then hauled across the Sinai Desert appeared remote. Accordingly, in issuing to the A. & N.Z. Army Corps Grant's instructions, Brigadier-General White mitigated their effect by adding a note:

In some cases it is necessary to forgo the advantages of a good field of fire in order to avoid artillery bombardment. At the same time it must be borne in mind that night attacks are most probable, and the existence of dead ground in our front may enable the enemy to mass unseen.

He himself personally determined the site of all the more important positions in the Australian sector, aiming at a compromise between the two principles.

On arrival at Serapeum and Ferry Post respectively, the leading units of the 1st and 2nd Divisions at once crossed the Canal and moved out to the desert positions. The solitary outpost of the 8th Brigade on the sand ridge known as Gebel Habeita was relieved next day, and returned to Serapeum. The roads, railways, and pipe-lines had at this time progressed little beyond the bridge-head camps. The front-line troops had consequently to reach their positions by marching, and, though the distance was short, some battalions did not reach their intended camp-site without distress. On January 26th the 18th Battalion traversed a severe stage from the "staging camp"<sup>39</sup> at Ferry Post to "Duntroon Plateau," seven miles across the desert. The weather was wild, and, shortly before the end of the march,

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<sup>39</sup> The camp (situated near the bridge-head) at which battalions rested on their way to or from the front.

rain began to fall in torrents. The 18th, however, pitched camp and by morning had recovered its freshness. In the 1st Division three days later the 5th Battalion had an even more trying experience, marching in the heat from Serapeum to Gebel Habeita—seven miles over gravel flats, and then two over foot-hills of drift-sand. Nevertheless next day the battalion traced its defence-line, and on the day following began to dig. The various units camped in tents in the hollows behind their works. Each day half or more of each battalion went out to dig, while the rest were training in the sand. Thus it is recorded that within a week the 5th Battalion had excavated 900 yards of trenches in two separate posts. In revetting the trench walls it had used 33,000 sandbags, and was then waiting for more. Within a fortnight the 5th, 6th, 3rd, and 2nd Brigades (in that order, from left to right) had created a chain of works along twenty miles of front, the 2nd Division occupying the northern sector, eight miles in extent, based on Ferry Post, and the 1st Division the southern sector of twelve miles, based on Serapeum.<sup>40</sup>

The formation of the defence line was thus very rapid. Meanwhile the bridge-heads had developed into large camps and busy centres of work, with native sailing craft constantly unloading stone for the roads, batches of troops crossing the new bridges or being hauled in the old ferry punts, which were man-handled night and day by standing fatigue parties of thirty perspiring Australians. Other parties unloaded from boats barbed-wire, sandbags, hurdles for revetting the trenches, and black pipes for the desert water-supply. Large dépôts of stores accumulated at the bridge-head camp, whence each day the small railway train—loaded and worked by the Railway Supply Detachment from Sydney and a few locomotive men who were easily found in the A.I.F.—carried them to railhead, then only two and a half miles out. There they were loaded on camels which, at this stage, carried also

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<sup>40</sup> Most of the 7th Brigade was at Ferry Post bridge-head, but the 1st Brigade had to be left at Tel el Kebir through shortage of water at Serapeum.





1. CAMEL TRAIN CARRYING WATER TO THE FRONT LINE IN THE DESERT  
EAST OF FERRY POST

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. G1465.*



2. THE END OF ONE OF THE DECAUVILLE RAILWAYS EAST OF FERRY POST

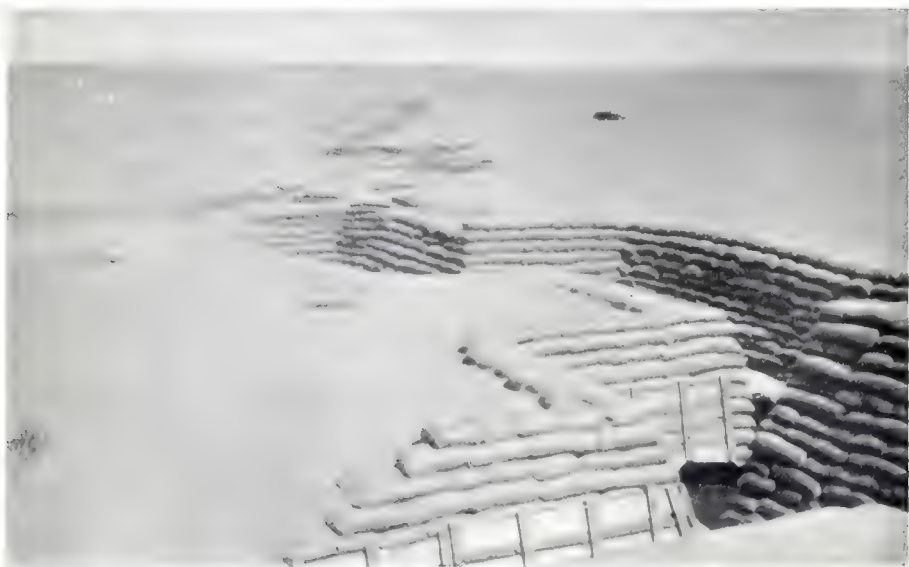
*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. G1460.*

*To face p. 24.*



3. A FRONT-LINE POST BUILT BY THE 9TH BATTALION EAST OF SERAPEUM  
The officer is Captain D. Chapman (afterwards killed at Pozieres—  
according to some reports, the first Australian to land at Anzac).

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. G1493.*



4. FRONT LINE CONSTRUCTED BY THE AUSTRALIANS IN THE DESERT  
EAST OF FERRY POST

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. G1470.*

*To face p. 25.*

the whole of the water and food for the working troops. The scene at railhead and the front is described in a diary—

After the end of the road there winds across the hills the endless writhing serpent of the pipe-line. . . . Endless strings of camels come out and return under the guard of a solitary Australian or perhaps two—riding alongside with rifle slung or perched on a camel. The water at present is carried from the end of the railway line in kegs of iron on the camels' backs. Right out in front, just behind the lines of model trenches, is a line of isolated little camps, each in a desert valley generally out of sight of the next—although you can see the next company's trenches and brown gridiron of barbed-wire on the neighbouring desert hummocks to right and left. They look like model trenches, neat little redoubts, with dug-outs for their little headquarters and telephone rooms all complete . . . and then the sand storm—*khamisin*—comes along and fills it all up with drift sand, and it has to be dug out again.

"There," adds the same writer, "our men live, fairly contented so long as there is any rumour of a Turk being about, getting half-rations of water daily—just enough to exist upon." In truth this period was afterwards looked back to by many as the pleasantest time in the history of the A.I.F., especially for the units at the bridge-heads and on the Canal banks. The diary<sup>41</sup> of one of the men in a reserve battalion says:

The place where we are now camped (Deversoir) is a nice little spot about 50 yards from the water, and so we get plenty of swimming and fishing. The work we do here is very easy, three hours drill a day and patrol duty every other night.

Another diarist<sup>42</sup> at one of the bridge-heads, after noting that the very heavy work on the ferry-fatigue had at first caused complaints, writes of the daily interest of the passing shipping:

Big ocean liners, pleasure yachts, and torpedo destroyers suggestive of power and deadliness in every line of their long black sinister-looking hulls, pass before us like a panorama about every hour of the day.

The Canal and its banks were daily thronged by hundreds of Australian bathers.<sup>43</sup> Even for the troops in the desert, life was rendered fairly pleasant by their great physical fitness.

I am a different man (wrote one<sup>44</sup> to his mother) now I have lost all superfluous flesh, and am as hard as nails and as brown as a well-done peanut.

<sup>41</sup> That of L/Cpl. E. J. Belford, 1st Bn., mortally wounded at Fleurbaix, 18 June, 1916.

<sup>42</sup> Pte. D. B. Harford (No. 3844; 51st Bn.). Miner; of Ravensthorpe, W. Aust.; b. Albany, W. Aust., 1887. Died of wounds, 31 March, 1917.

<sup>43</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 169.

<sup>44</sup> Pte. F. E. Elliott (No. 1606; 17th Bn.). Carpenter; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Alexandria, N.S.W., 13 Aug., 1896. Killed in action, 26 July, 1916.

The distributions of food and other presents by the representatives of the Australian Comforts Fund added appreciably to the happiness of all ranks.

For the troops in the front line there was just sufficient evidence of the enemy force concentrated on the other side of the desert to add the spice of interest to the routine. Although the sand-hills eastward appeared void of life, and the infantry patrols in front of the line—and even those of the Bikaner Camel Corps which went farther out—might go their daily round for a week without seeing a sign of either Turks or Arabs, yet occasionally enemy patrols were sighted, and at least once an important spy was caught after swimming the Canal.<sup>45</sup> Other signs of the enemy were—

February 9th. Patrol of the 9th Battalion caught sight of two mounted men and observed certain tracks “indicating that the enemy is becoming watchful.”

February 13th. Another patrol of the 9th Battalion found the track of naked feet coming from the desert “towards our line.” The second toe in the right foot was missing. The patrol followed the track till dusk, and then returned. Next day a patrol of the 2nd Brigade took up the search, found where the man had slept the night before, and traced the tracks towards the 3rd Brigade line, to find that he had already come in and been captured. Meanwhile a patrol had followed the tracks out into the desert for 15 miles, where they were lost on hard ground. Seven camels were grazing in a desert valley, but no men were seen, and the patrol returned.

February 15th. One of the British aeroplanes which frequently reconnoitred Sinai dropped a message into the 18th Battalion's lines at “Mt. Kembla”—“4 to 5 miles out, due E. of your camp, a patrol of Arabs, about 10, seven camels counted, one Arab wounded.”

On the same day a patrol of the 6th Battalion saw 15 camels grazing 15 miles to the front.

On the first appearance of enemy patrols, Captain Wilder-Neligan<sup>46</sup> of the 9th Battalion, a restless adventurous spirit, asked to be allowed to take out a patrol on camels and cut them off. This, subject to certain precautions, was agreed to. Neligan went out with camels and mounted rifles, but though, after leaving the latter, he pushed fifteen miles

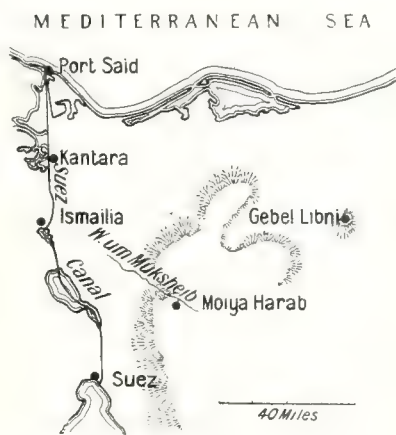
<sup>45</sup> On Jan. 8 one of the chief enemy spies was caught by the 8th Brigade after swimming the Canal. On Feb. 9 an Arab was similarly arrested. He said that he had come across Sinai, but it was believed that he was outward-bound. In order to detect such attempts to cross the Canal, a camel with driver and escort was sent every evening along its eastern bank, dragging a sort of harrow, which swept a track in which the footprints of any one crossing would be easily observable. This was examined every morning by a patrol.

<sup>46</sup> See Vol. I, p. 357. For private reasons his surname had since been changed.



eastward, and returned with the animals much distressed, nothing was seen except some camels. Farther north also Lieutenant MacCallum,<sup>47</sup> with a sergeant and some of the Bikaner Camel Corps, went out ten miles, but could see nothing of the enemy.<sup>48</sup>

Fourteen miles east of the Australian position the mountains of Sinai began to rise from the sand-hills; and down them, through a winding valley, the Wady um Muksheib, debouched the central road by which the Turks had come the previous year. On February 21st the Anzac Corps was warned that high up in this valley, at a point known as Moiya Harab, thirty miles from the 1st Division's front, a British aeroplane had sighted 200 enemy camel-men. A larger body had also been reported behind Gebel Libni, a mountain some seventy miles farther back. The divisions were therefore warned that some form of raid or reconnaissance might be expected, and Murray determined to bring up the light horse, in order that, if a raid were made by the Turks, the horsemen might attempt to cut them off.<sup>49</sup> Two brigades—the 2nd and 3rd—were accordingly ordered up from Cairo to a position west of the Canal near Serapeum. No raiding force, however, appeared, the nearest approach to it being a tribe of Arabs—ragged men, women, and children—who on February 28th, with herds of goats and about 100 camels, came wandering out of the foot-hills and across the front of the defence lines. A weekly market was afterwards



<sup>47</sup> Maj. W. P. MacCallum, D.S.O., M.C. Brigade-Major, 5th Aust. Inf. Bde., 1917/18. Medical student; of Rose Bay, N.S.W.; b. Darlinghurst, N.S.W., 3 April, 1895.

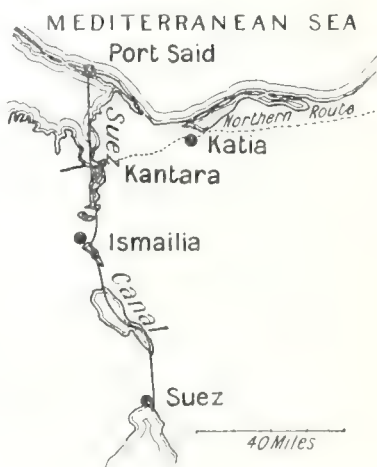
<sup>48</sup> They were, however, themselves seen by the sentries or patrols of the next brigade, and appear to have been reported as "an armed enemy party"—with the result that the 6th Brigade was ordered to man the trenches for the night and to stand to arms at dawn.

<sup>49</sup> Murray at this stage inquired of Birdwood what steps had been taken to form the Anzac Mounted Division.

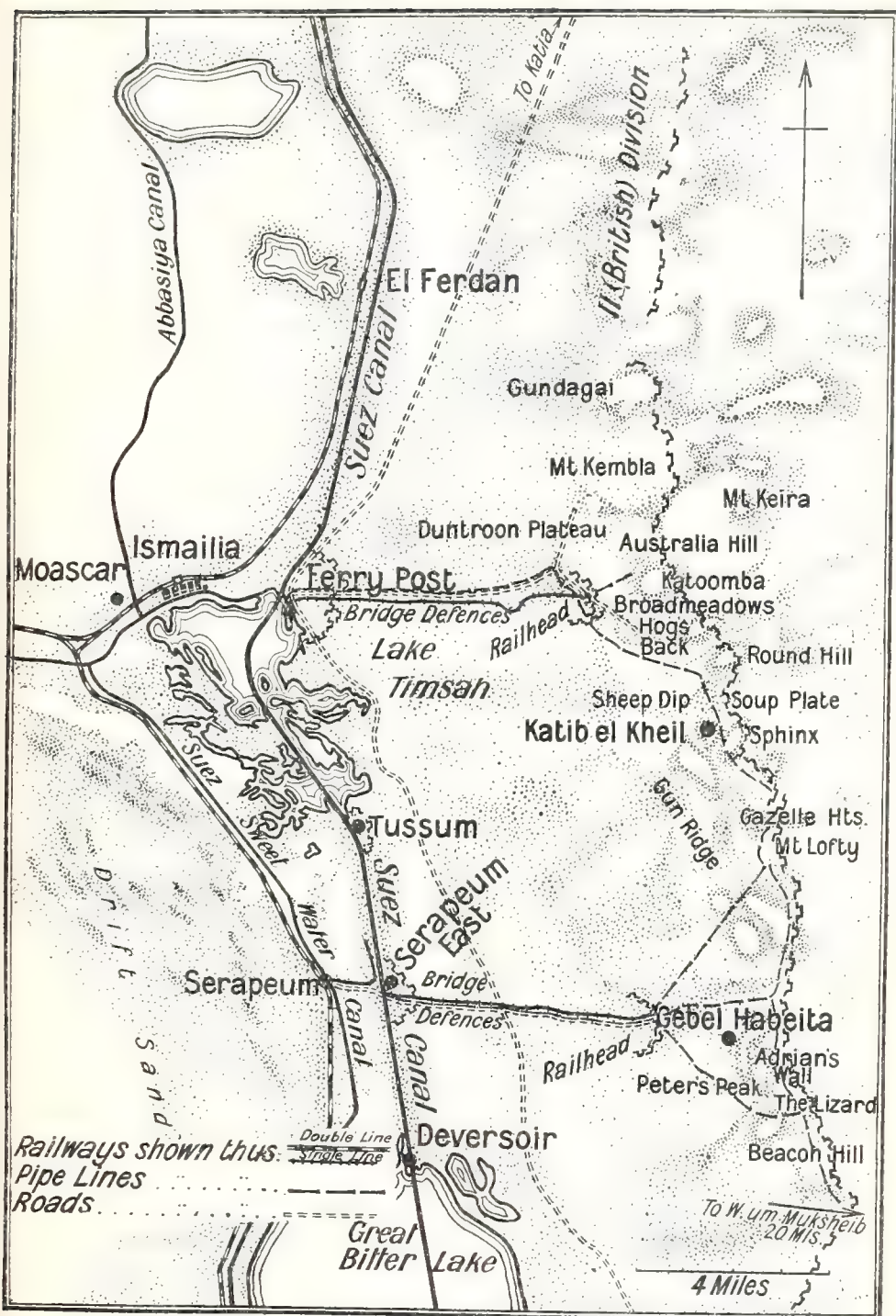
arranged with these people, mainly in order to obtain news of the enemy. Early in March, a British aeroplane having been lost while searching the Moiya Harab area, Captain Neligan again obtained leave to go out with a patrol—this time of Bikaner camel-men, with the support, up to a certain distance, of some light horse. He searched the Wady um Muksheib area as far as Moiya Harab, where he saw a few camels and recent traces of goats. Returning on March 11th he reported:<sup>50</sup>

It is quite certain that there have been no enemy patrols or other movements of recent date over any of this area.

It appeared by now that any Turkish advance of importance would be made along the northern or coastal road, where even in summer the wells would render possible the passage of a limited force. From the time when, as Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London, he had first studied this problem, Murray had been convinced that the defence of Egypt on the east could be best assured by pushing forward along this road, and occupying at least the Katia district, through which it debouched towards the Canal. With that district denied them, the Turks—at any rate after the drying of the other wells in early summer—could not concentrate any overwhelming force within striking distance of the Canal. His measures towards this end had begun as soon as he reached Egypt, and he intended that, by the beginning of the hot weather—about April 15th—the Katia district should be occupied by a division of British infantry and most of the Anzac Mounted Division. If this were done, he felt confident that he could hold the Canal securely with three other infantry divisions and some attached mounted brigades, thus freeing the rest of his force for the Western Front or other theatres.



<sup>50</sup> The aeroplane was not found by Neligan. It landed farther south, and pilot and observer had walked back to the British lines.



No. 2 (CENTRAL) SECTION OF THE SUEZ CANAL DEFENCES, DUG BY AUSTRALIAN DIVISIONS, JANUARY-MARCH 1916



It was now becoming daily more probable that the huge system of defences along the Canal would never be required, although its completion had been even more laborious than was originally intended. The reason for the added labour was that, when the excavation had been proceeding for a fortnight, Murray entirely reversed the policy which he had previously adopted. Upon inspecting the desert trenches on February 7th, he began with those of the 18th Battalion, which, in strict compliance with the principles laid down in Grant's circular, had, before digging trenches on the summit of a desert rise, concentrated its effort upon excavating a fortified "keep" on the rear slope. As he proceeded down the line, Murray became strongly critical of this policy, insisting that the forward slope must be held. In consequence of the difficulties of transport, he said, the Turks were unlikely to bring up much heavy artillery, and the danger of siting trenches on the forward slopes was thus slight in comparison with the advantage of being able to see the enemy as he approached. On his instructions orders were at once issued by Godley that trenches

must have ample field of fire, at least 400 yards, and be sited to be free from dead ground in front.

This order and the one with which Murray supported it on February 14th were a complete contradiction of the principles to which he had previously ordered subordinate commanders to adhere. They repeated, in a much stronger form, the warning note in White's order of February 9th. The complete replanning of the lines was avoided only by adding to certain of the posts a curved bastion-trench, reaching forward to the fore slope. For ten days the lines were almost daily visited by numerous generals and their staffs discussing the changes, and occasioning much sardonic comment among the troops, who were fully conscious of the reason for all this extra work. Murray himself made two further inspections, and eventually approved of the modifications. By the end of February, in the forward area of the 2nd Division alone, at least twenty miles of trenches had been dug, in addition to certain second-line defences near the rail-head and a third line at the bridge-head and Canal bank. In each division's area the line of water-pipes, railway, and



road had reached the intended railhead, five or six miles out in the desert, and were now branching north and south.<sup>51</sup> At the two railheads there had grown up extensive camps and dépôts of rails, hurdles, and other stores. Before the end of February the defence works had on three occasions been partly smothered up by the action of strong winds; and on March 2nd a desert sand-storm blowing for three days, completely filled some parts of the line. But as the front wall of the trenches, and in many places the rear also, had been revetted with hurdles and sandbags,<sup>52</sup> the drift-sand was on each occasion shovelled out in fairly quick time.

But already on February 15th Murray had written to Robertson:

It is clear that the security of Egypt against attack from the East is not best assured by the construction of a great defensive position in proximity to the Suez Canal.

He stressed his plan of pushing forward troops and railway to Katia and possibly to El Arish. He now intended to rely, not upon a permanent garrison occupying the trench-line, but on mobile columns which could strike the enemy a day's march east of the Canal. He accordingly instructed his commanders to organise such columns in each of the three sections. The front line might henceforth be held only by a slight force encamped in rear of it and occupying it by means of sentries. On March 9th G.H.Q. ordered that the position of all desert works should be marked with stakes, so that, if any of them should be abandoned and become filled with sand, there would at least be these signposts remaining to show their location.

Such was the end of the great plan put forward in November by Murray himself as Chief of the Imperial General Staff. By this time a very different task was occupying almost the whole attention of the leaders and troops of the A.I.F.

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<sup>51</sup> From Serapeum, however, water still had to be carried entirely on camels; first, because the contraction and expansion caused much bending in the pipe-line, with consequent leaks; and, second, because until the end of March water in the reservoir was not passed by the medical authorities as fit for human consumption.

<sup>52</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 167.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DOUBLING OF THE A.I.F.

UPON his return to Egypt General Godley—who by reason of holding the corps command was then also commander of the Australian Imperial Force<sup>1</sup>—had found himself confronted at once by two urgent problems. The first was how to absorb between 35,000 and 40,000 Australian and New Zealand reinforcements then in Egypt. He estimated that after the three Anzac divisions from Gallipoli had been made up to strength there would still be 40,000 Australian and New Zealand troops unallotted,<sup>2</sup> not counting the 50,000 new troops promised by Australia and the further reinforcements—"about 12,000 per month"—who would accompany and follow them.

Godley proposed that this situation should be met by forming out of the surplus several new divisions. As commander of the New Zealand force, he had long hoped that it might some day be possible for that Dominion, instead of providing only a part of a composite "New Zealand and Australian" division, to furnish a complete division of New Zealand troops. A second brigade of New Zealand infantry was then actually arriving from the antipodes, and the accumulation in Egypt of New Zealand reinforcements seemed to afford the opportunity of supplying the other units necessary for such "a purely New Zealand division." It appeared to him that the difficulty of absorbing the Australian reinforcements could be solved by similarly creating in Egypt two new Australian divisions, which could be officered and trained by experienced soldiers of the divisions from Gallipoli. The new divisions could be formed into an "Australian Army Corps," the older divisions remaining in the "Anzac Corps." Upon the arrival of the additional 50,000 men from Australia, yet another division might be constituted.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 145, 147; and Vol. II, p. 418.

<sup>2</sup> These include the 8th Infantry Brigade and four light horse and mounted rifles brigades.

<sup>3</sup> Godley further suggested that the Australian "training brigades" in Egypt should be merged into the new divisions. For the divisional commands he mentioned the names of Generals Walker and M'Cay (both then convalescent after wounds) and possibly General Spens, the British officer commanding the Australian and New Zealand Training Dépôt in Egypt.

But Godley was also faced with a second problem—how he, in addition to his active work on the Canal, could administer and organise the spreading branches of the A.I.F. The task would include not only the creation of the new divisions, but the daily administration of all divisions, line-of-communication units, headquarters, and returned wounded and reinforcements. The control of all these, it seemed to him, should be the duty not of a corps commander, but of an army commander. Moreover, this administrative task not being one which he had voluntarily undertaken,<sup>4</sup> he conceived a desire—even more natural than that of Bridges—to disencumber himself of it. Accordingly, in two memoranda to Murray dated January 13th and 14th respectively, he put forward his suggestion—first, that the unallotted troops should be formed into two new divisions, constituting a new army corps; and, second, that the administration of the A.I.F. might, with advantage to the efficiency of the force, be vested in a special army commander.<sup>5</sup>

The report of Murray's staff on these proposals illustrates the attitude which, though not deliberately hostile, forced the Australian and New Zealand leaders to seek administrative independence. "The Australian Training Dépôt in Egypt," it said, "has always found the greatest difficulty in producing officers of any value, and non-commissioned officers of any sort at all." This was likely to be an "insuperable difficulty" in the way of hurriedly forming the new divisions. As for the army commander and staff, all that was really required appeared to be an Australian and New Zealand training centre and base, and, if Murray approved, the staff offered to work out and submit a scheme for "an Australian and New Zealand Training Centre and Base" which, it thought, "could be managed to meet all requirements much more economically, appropriately, and satisfactorily."

The value of some of these arguments may be judged by the fact that within seven months the 4th Australian Division, whose projected formation was thus opposed, was making its brilliant advance towards Mouquet Farm, in the thick of

<sup>4</sup> He was also administrative commander of the N.Z.E.F. Of this, largely his own creation, he had no wish to resign control.

<sup>5</sup> Godley's memorandum suggested merely "an army commander," but it seems clear that a specially appointed army commander, not an already existing one, was intended.

the First Battle of the Somme.<sup>6</sup> Fortunately the Commander-in-Chief, far from rejecting Godley's suggestions, intimated that he would favour any workable scheme likely to assist the two objects he had in view—the protection of Egypt against invasion from Sinai, and the provision “of as large and efficient a force as possible, available for a strenuous campaign in France.”

Two days after Godley's original proposal had been sent to him, Murray—as one of his first duties after reaching Egypt—visited Tel el Kebir and inspected the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions, each massed before him in a magnificent review.<sup>7</sup> He appears at the same time to have discussed the suggestions with Godley and White. Murray himself had been at the War Office when the Australian Government's offer of three additional divisions had been received, and he was probably aware of the subsequent correspondence and of the fact that, though more than seven weeks had elapsed, the form of the new contingent was still undetermined. The War Office had inquired whether the divisions could be sent complete with artillery, signallers, pioneers, and divisional cavalry (involving an addition of over 15,000 officers and men), and the Australian staff had replied that, if the contingent was to be formed into divisions, the War Office must provide the artillery, both guns and men. This matter was thus still unsettled, and there seemed to Murray no impediment to the adoption of Godley's suggestion; indeed to most persons on the spot it appeared unwise that the formation of new divisions should be attempted in Australia while surplus reinforcements sufficient to create two of them were “kicking their heels” in the Cairo camps.

Four days later, on January 19th, Birdwood, returning to Egypt after the breaking up of his Dardanelles Army, seized with enthusiasm upon the proposal to create not merely a new army corps, but an Australian and New Zealand army. There were in Egypt sufficient Anzac troops to form one as large at any rate as the original British Army in France. In addition to the infantry divisions there would be the mounted troops—whether formed into a mounted division or

<sup>6</sup> The reader may also withhold judgment of the Australian officers until he has read the narrative of the Battle of Fromelles (*Chapters xii and xiii*).

<sup>7</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 173.



not—the heavy artillery brigade, the flying squadron then about to arrive in Egypt, and a number of other units. Both Birdwood and Godley, having been in daily contact with the Anzac troops, knew how keenly the notion of an Anzac army would appeal to the majority of officers and men. If organised merely in army corps, they would probably be allotted to different parts of the front, or even to different theatres of war; but, if combined into an army, they would naturally be kept, as far as possible, together. This, though at times inconvenient, would have advantages which the British staff as yet imperfectly realised. The national pride of these troops was intense, and they possessed a strong mutual affection and complete trust in each other's qualities, conditions of the utmost importance when troops have to support one another in battle. Murray favoured the proposal, both as promising a most valuable reinforcement to the mother country and incidentally as a means of bringing into control and vigorous training the mass of reinforcements whose presence in Cairo so greatly troubled him.

A scheme further elaborated by Birdwood was accordingly cabled on January 21st by Murray to the War Office:

I find we now have a very large accumulation of Australian and New Zealand reinforcements here, which cannot be absorbed in existing organisations. It is essential that these should be formed into definite units with the least possible delay, both for reasons of discipline and training. . . . (Then follows Birdwood's scheme, which is explained below in greater detail.) . . . If these proposals are agreed to it means that we will very shortly have four Australian divisions and one New Zealand division all with the nucleus of a complete organisation. I strongly recommend that these be formed at once into an Australian and New Zealand army of two corps under Birdwood. From the Secretary of State for the Colonies' telegram of 26th November<sup>8</sup> it is apparent that Australia contemplates raising the equivalent of three complete divisions. My proposals give us two out of these three immediately, and I hope that Commonwealth Government may be informed that one more only will be expected from Australia, the balance of numbers enlisted being diverted to reinforcements to meet wastage of the five divisions. . . . Australian Government are of course unaware of the large number (of) unabsorbed men here, or of urgent necessity of forming this surplus into organised bodies.

Murray added that he understood that Birdwood had the confidence of the Australian and New Zealand Governments.

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<sup>8</sup> Apparently the telegram *received from Australia* by the Secretary of State is meant.

He further stated that, if the suggested scheme was agreed to, he proposed to let Birdwood arrange all details by direct communication with them.

It will be observed that Murray, who had long since been promised the Anzac Mounted Division for the defence of Egypt, did not include it in the proposed army. Birdwood himself, on the other hand, never gave up the hope of so combining it, and the men of the light horse themselves were at this stage keenly expectant that, as a mounted force, they would accompany their infantry wherever it might be employed.

For the formation of the new infantry divisions the scheme proposed by Birdwood was as follows:

(1) New Zealand Division. A new brigade of New Zealand infantry—the “Rifle Brigade”—was then arriving. By using the New Zealand reinforcements then in Cairo, and by transferring others from the mounted rifles, there could be formed a third infantry brigade and additional artillery, together with transport, engineers, and ambulances sufficient to furnish a complete and independent New Zealand infantry division. This would release the Australian portion of the N.Z. & A.—the 4th Brigade.<sup>9</sup>

(2) Two new Australian divisions. The existing Australian infantry comprised two divisions (1st and 2nd) and two brigades (4th and 8th). Birdwood proposed that each of these latter brigades should form the nucleus of a new division,<sup>10</sup> and that four new brigades should be created—two for each new division. In order to form these he adopted a plan with which he had been associated in another service—that of splitting certain of his existing battalions into halves, and then expanding each half, by means of reinforcements, into a complete battalion. Sixteen new battalions were required, and it happened that the original Australian force employed at the Landing had included exactly sixteen. The units of the 2nd Division which had been subsequently raised had never yet received complete training. Consequently the

<sup>9</sup> The 1st and 3rd Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigades, which had formed part of this division at Anzac, had been withdrawn from it since the Evacuation, and were to form (together with the 2nd Light Horse Brigade) the Anzac Mounted Division.

<sup>10</sup> This was originally suggested by Godley in his memorandum of Jan. 13. The plan of splitting the veteran brigades into two was, however, Birdwood's.

sixteen "veteran" battalions of the 1st Division and 4th Brigade were selected for breaking up. White, who feared that too great a blow would be struck at the pride of the veteran units, urged that it would be better to transfer selected officers and N.C.O's; and the same objection was vehemently taken by divisional and other commanders, when the news was broken to them. But Birdwood held to his decision. An even more difficult problem was that of providing artillery, a service requiring numerous specialists and longer and more careful training. The problem was rendered even more difficult by the fact that the Anzac divisions had little more than half the artillery that was now being provided for all divisions moving to the Western Front. The War Office was at this time supplying its New Army divisions with three brigades (each of four batteries) of field guns and one brigade of howitzers, whereas the Australian divisions had only three brigades (each of three batteries) of field-guns and no howitzers—this being a lower scale specially authorised for Territorial divisions serving in Egypt.<sup>11</sup> The New Zealanders had even less; the British divisions in Egypt also were short of artillery. Murray was strongly of opinion that any divisions which were to be sent from Egypt to the Western Front should be provided with artillery and all other services<sup>12</sup> on the same scale as those already there. This, if actually possible, was obviously the right course, but it would practically necessitate quadruplication. Birdwood and White were afraid that the task of doubling the existing artillery was the most that could possibly be undertaken in the short time available. Consequently at a conference with Murray's staff it was decided that the Anzac divisions should for the present continue to be provided with artillery on the lower scale. In the Australian divisions this would be achieved by each of the older divisions—the 1st and 2nd—giving up an artillery

<sup>11</sup> Technically known as the scale authorised by War Establishments 1915 (Part VIII) for Territorial divisions serving in Egypt. The higher scale was that authorised by War Establishments 1915 (Part VII) for New Army divisions.

<sup>12</sup> The "establishment" of the Australian and New Zealand forces was also to differ from that of the New Armies in the following respects: First, the divisional cavalry was to consist of one regiment (instead of one squadron) per division. Second, the mounted troops were to be organised on the Australian and New Zealand establishments respectively. Other differences, in the medical establishments, are mentioned later (*pp.* 43, 164).



brigade and raising from other units and from reinforcements a new brigade to replace it. The two brigades given up would be allotted, at least temporarily, to the new divisions. The artillery staff of each of the new divisions was also to raise, with the help of other large transfers from the old artillery, two new brigades. The necessary new field companies, ambulances, transport trains, and other divisional units were to be created in a somewhat similar manner.

These proposals, especially the raising of so much new artillery, would of course, if sanctioned, prevent any of the Anzac divisions from being ready for transfer to France for several months. The 1st Division would be rendered almost as raw as the new formations, which, however, would have the compensating advantage of being nearly as experienced as the 1st. The projected task of organisation—to double the Australian and New Zealand force within a couple of months—was obviously a very heavy one; indeed it proved by far the greatest in the history of the A.I.F. In order that no time might be lost, Birdwood, who since the dissolution of the Dardanelles Army had been a commander without troops, borrowed White from Godley's staff, and with the approval of Murray commenced to settle the lines of the reorganisation. Meanwhile Murray's telegram suggesting the scheme had reached the War Office,<sup>13</sup> which had forwarded to Australia and New Zealand the proposals for creating the new divisions. "The third new division, less artillery," it added, "would be raised in Australia." A hope was expressed that Australia would agree, and about the same time Birdwood also cabled direct to Australia urging consent. On February 2nd the Commonwealth Government agreed, undertaking to raise in Australia the third new division, and also its artillery personnel, which, however, would be untrained. Meanwhile Murray had telegraphed to the War Office that he proposed to appoint Major-General Fanshawe, "as being specially suited to deal with Australians," to command the second corps

<sup>13</sup> The argument as to who should provide the artillery for the three new Australian divisions was still proceeding. The War Office had asked again that the men should be Australian, even if only partly trained. The Military Board in Melbourne was divided. The Chief of Ordnance (Col. Dangar) urged that the only way in which even partially trained men could be provided was by raising them from the reinforcements then in Egypt and training them there. Senator Pearce, however, had approved of the advice of the Chief of Staff (Col. H. Foster) that the men must be provided even if reinforcements had to be omitted, when he received the cable forwarding Birdwood's proposals.



of this army. But in the opinion of the military authorities in London consideration of the formation of an army was premature. Murray was so informed, and the proposal was not passed on by the War Office to the Dominions.<sup>14</sup> To Birdwood, as to all members of his staff and of the force who were aware of the proposal, this came as a sharp disappointment. The project had become widely known, and among officers and men of the corps the reorganisation was generally, in its earlier stages, referred to as the "forming of an Australasian army." That proposal having for the present been rejected, it followed that the main force would be organised in two army corps. It was decided that these should be called the "I and II Anzac Corps,"<sup>15</sup> of which Godley would continue in command of one, and Birdwood, when he had finished his task of reorganisation, would take the other.

While the general scheme was still being considered by the War Office and Dominions, the detailed plan was worked out by Birdwood and White. The cautiousness of the New Zealand Government, which was not sure whether future reinforcement drafts would be adequate, delayed until February 17th definite sanction for the "formation" of the New Zealand Division. As, however, all authorities in Egypt were satisfied that the numbers would be ample, Murray decided not to wait for formal consent. But, unlike Maxwell, he was not seized of the principles of colonial self-government; and at this stage, when the first steps were about to be taken, it became clear that his staff took for granted that every important change in the organisation or command of the A.I.F. must be initiated and controlled by itself. It was only after a strong statement of the case for Australian self-government, made by White to Murray's chief-of-staff and

<sup>14</sup> The copy of this reply in the available records speaks of the projected "Australian" army, an obvious mistake for "Australasian." It is on account of just this confusion that the people of New Zealand were understood by some to object to the term "Australasian," and to the association of their force with that of the Commonwealth. The first objection was naturally shared by the New Zealanders at the front, but the great bulk of the Australian and New Zealand troops always preferred to fight and live together.

<sup>15</sup> The title of the original corps had been "Australian and New Zealand Army Corps." The new titles were "1st Anzac Corps" and "2nd Anzac Corps." The fact was not ignored that the last two letters of "Anzac" already stood for "Army Corps"; but "Anzac" had become a recognised term, and the new name was deliberately adopted as being simpler and less liable to confusion than any of the possible alternatives. (See also Vol. I, 1st edn., Glossary, p. 699.)

quartermaster-general, that it was agreed at the end of January that Birdwood, with White as his staff officer (technically D.A. & Q.M.G.), should temporarily have control of the whole Australian and New Zealand force and commence reorganisation. Godley would have the field command of the three veteran divisions of the corps on the Canal. Furthermore, being administrative commander of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, he would superintend the formation of the New Zealand Division at Moascar. The two new Australian divisions, on the other hand, would be formed at Tel el Kebir, the actual training and control of them during this process being entrusted to that capable veteran Major-General Sir H. V. Cox. For the formation and training of his two divisions (to be known for the present as "Australian Provisional Formations") Cox was given a staff similar to that of a division. This staff, being at the beginning, like that of the A. & N.Z. Army Corps, a purely British unit formed by Murray for the control of this portion of his army, was composed largely of officers selected by Murray's staff.<sup>16</sup>

The task of directing this great reorganisation fell upon General White, with Major Griffiths to assist him. For putting his decisions into force by means of flawless procedure he relied entirely upon Griffiths. In matters affecting the transport and allied services he was further assisted by an able young British officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Gibbs,<sup>17</sup> who had been lent shortly before the war for the purpose of reorganising that service in Australia. The crucial work—that of laying down the method and principles—was achieved by White through the publication of a series of some fifty "Circular Memoranda," of which the first two, issued on February 12th, ordered the formation of the new Australian infantry brigades; the fifth ordered the creation of two Anzac Corps instead of one;<sup>18</sup> the remainder, issued at almost

<sup>16</sup> Many, however, already belonged to the A.I.F. Thus Lieut.-Col. G. C. E. Elliott, originally C.R.E. of the 1st Division, was allotted to organise new companies of engineers; Lieut.-Col. H. L. Mackworth, who had trained the signallers of the 1st Division, and Major F. D. Rossiter, were to organise the signal companies; and Lieut.-Col. G. W. Barber (under the direction of Surgeon-General Howse) the field ambulances.

<sup>17</sup> Lieut.-Col. S. G. Gibbs; R.A.S.C. D.A.Q.M.G., 1 Anzac Corps, 1916/17. Officer of British Regular Army; of Kensington, Eng., and Sydney; b. Southampton, Eng., 19 March, 1886. Killed in action, 20 Sept., 1917.

<sup>18</sup> The corps staffs, however, still remained British formations.

daily intervals from February 14th to the end of March, prescribed the method of forming the new artillery, the field ambulances, the companies of engineers, signallers, and train, the pioneer battalions, the sanitary sections, the railway supply detachments, bakeries, butcheries, and other "supply" units on lines of communication, the machine-gun companies, the ordnance corps, postal services, cyclist companies, veterinary units, and corps of military police. They ended with two memoranda establishing the Anzac Mounted Division and the dépôt units in which reinforcements for the A.I.F. were henceforward to be trained.<sup>19</sup>

The memorandum providing for the increase in the infantry was dated February 12th:

Out of the sixteen veteran battalions in the A. & N.Z. Army Corps (1st to 16th) it is intended to form 16 new battalions.

This will be done by dividing the veteran battalions into two wings as shown below—a headquarters wing and a second wing. Both wings will then be filled up by reinforcements. . . .

(1) Headquarters will not actually be divided, but the following details will be transferred to the second wing—

Pioneers 5

Signallers 12

(2) Machine-gun section will not be divided; it will remain with Headquarters wing.

(3) Companies will be fairly divided into two parts. . . .

The whole of the regimental transport, all specialist equipment—and individual specialists where there was only one of a particular rank—were to remain with the headquarters wing. With these exceptions a clean cut was to be made through each company, platoon, and section, so that every battalion, on the day after being divided, could be paraded in two parts, each complete in practically everything except the headquarters and transport of the "second wing," but at half strength. In the second circular, published the same day, were laid down the regimental numbers immediately to be assumed by these half-battalions, and the new constitution of the infantry of the A.I.F. As the division to be formed in Australia was being named by the Commonwealth Government the "3rd," Birdwood numbered the Egyptian divisions

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<sup>19</sup> There appear to have been fifty-one memoranda in all.

"4th" and "5th,"<sup>20</sup> and the battalions were numbered as follows:

OLD DIVISIONS.		OLD UNITS.	NEW UNITS.	NEW DIVISIONS.
		<i>H.Q. Wing.</i>	<i>Second Wing.</i>	
"Veteran" units (to be divided)	<u>1st Division</u> ..	1st Bde. to form	14th Bde.	To be combined with the unattached 8th Brigade to form the <u>5th Division.</u>
		1 Btn. " "	53 Btn.	
		2 Btn. " "	54 Btn.	
		3 Btn. " "	55 Btn.	
		4 Btn. " "	56 Btn.	
		2nd Bde. " "	15th Bde.	
		5 Btn. " "	57 Btn.	
		6 Btn. " "	58 Btn.	
		7 Btn. " "	59 Btn.	
		8 Btn. " "	60 Btn.	
		3rd Bde. " "	13th Bde.	To be combined with the (now) unattached 4th Brigade to form the <u>4th Division.</u>
		9 Btn. " "	49 Btn.	
		10 Btn. " "	50 Btn.	
		11 Btn. " "	51 Btn.	
		12 Btn. " "	52 Btn.	
		4th Bde. " "	12th Bde.	
		13 Btn. " "	45 Btn.	
		14 Btn. " "	46 Btn.	
	<u>2nd Division</u> (unchanged) ..	15 Btn. " "	47 Btn.	
		16 Btn. " "	48 Btn.	
		5th Bde. (17th-20th Btns.)		} <u>3rd Division</u> to be formed in Australia.
	Unattached (now to form part of the <u>5th Division</u> ) ..	6th Bde. (21st-24th Btns.)		
		7th Bde. (25th-28th Btns.)		
		8th Bde. (29th-32nd Btns.)		
		9th Bde. (33rd-36th Btns.)		
		10th Bde. (37th-40th Btns.)		
		11th Bde. (41st-44th Btns.)		

To provide engineers, the 4th and 5th Field Companies, which had been raised in Egypt for the 2nd Division and had served with distinction at Anzac, were transferred to the new divisions, the 5th being renumbered the 8th;<sup>21</sup> and four new companies were to be formed partly by transferring officers and N.C.O's from the existing ones, and partly from engineer reinforcements. The eight companies of horse-transport required for the new divisional trains were provided by dividing into eight parts three companies which happened to be surplus,<sup>22</sup> and bringing them up to strength with spare men from the trains of the older divisions and also from the

<sup>20</sup> He had at first proposed to call them the "3rd" and "4th."

<sup>21</sup> A new "5th" had been sent from Australia (see p. 16).

<sup>22</sup> These were—two duplicate companies which had been formed for the 2nd Division, and one belonging to the broken-up 4th Light Horse Brigade.



Reserve Park of the 1st Division, which was disbanded for the purpose. The expansion of the train was rendered easier by the fact that the British system of "pair-horse" waggons was at this juncture substituted for the Australian "four-horse" system. General White was insistent that in every possible way the organisation of each branch and unit must conform to that adopted in the British forces, of which the A.I.F. in France would form a part. The only important deviation other than those previously mentioned<sup>23</sup> was in the field ambulances, to each of which, on the urgent advice of Surgeon-General Howse, a small dental unit was now attached under a dentist with rank of lieutenant. This provision, which was more ample than that adopted in the British Army, proved to be of the utmost value. Howse also succeeded in obtaining White's consent to a change by which Australian ambulances were to be reduced from three sections to two. This rendered easy the creation of the four new ambulances, the detached third-sections of the eight already existing being simply re-combined into four new units. The result, however, was that the British authorities of the base, who were responsible for "issuing" stores, instruments, drugs, and other supplies to Australian ambulances, never knew on what scale to provide them. Upon the arrival of the A.I.F. in France—where it was of the first importance that every Australian unit should fill exactly the same camping or billet space, take on the same duties, and receive the same gear as the British units with which they constantly changed places--the system was immediately abolished by order of G.H.Q., and the Australian ambulances were again expanded to three sections. Though it was not always popular, the wisdom of White's policy of standardisation, without which the quick reliefs, so important in later years, could not have been smoothly accomplished, is not open to question.

Of at least equal importance for the creation of the new units was the choice of the right divisional, brigade, and unit commanders. The impossibility of finding them in Australia had been one of the two reasons for the Government's inability to offer, on November 25th, complete Australian-raised divisions. Even in July the Defence Department had been

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<sup>23</sup> In the artillery and divisional light horse (*see p. 37*).

forced to refuse to send a senior officer<sup>24</sup> specially asked for on the creation of the 2nd Division, and to inform the War Office that officers for the divisional headquarters, and to command the artillery and engineers, could not be supplied from Australia. In November it repeated this intimation, but on each occasion suggested that these staffs should be, if possible, obtained by appointing officers from the Australian forces overseas.<sup>25</sup> The intention of the Government that Australian commands should as far as possible be filled by Australian officers had been clearly represented to Hamilton and Birdwood at the time when General Walker was appointed in August to command the 1st Division.<sup>26</sup> But now, when it became necessary to appoint two generals to train and command the new divisions, Birdwood could see only one of his available subordinates in whose capacity for this position he felt complete confidence. He believed that White could admirably fill the position, but felt that it was strongly in the interest of Australia that he should continue, as chief of staff of the A.I.F., to advise its commander in Australian matters as well as in the operations of the force. M'Cay had already, at Anzac, been picked for a divisional commander, but immediately afterwards had to be invalided to Australia, where he was now acting as Inspector-General. To Chauvel, who had shown his capacity in commanding the 1st Division, Birdwood had already determined to allot the Anzac Mounted Division.<sup>27</sup> The high administrative ability of Monash he recognised, but was not sure of his power to face sudden difficulties with resolution, or to inspire troops with a fighting spirit. Holmes, of the 5th Brigade, Birdwood personally liked, being attracted by his great courage and frank, generous disposition; but, though Holmes had shouldered great

<sup>24</sup> Col. Dodds, then Adjutant-General in Melbourne.

<sup>25</sup> It was from this source that the Government, when offering the 50,000 troops, had intended to provide a large proportion of the brigade and regimental commanders. Steps were taken to recall for this purpose some of those who were in England convalescent.

<sup>26</sup> The Government asked why Chauvel (whose qualities had not at that time sufficiently impressed Birdwood and Hamilton) had been passed over. While concurring on that occasion in the appointment of a British officer, the Government strongly emphasised "its desire for the appointment of Australian officers wherever possible to command Australian units."

<sup>27</sup> Godley, when commanding the A.I.F., had first urged upon Murray Chauvel's claim to the command of this division. Murray appears to have suggested giving it to Maj.-Gen. A. H. Russell, then of the N.Z. & A. Division, who was Chauvel's junior. Chauvel commanded the 1st Division from Nov. 6 to March 14.

responsibilities in New Guinea, and, against Godley's advice, Birdwood had given him command of the 2nd Division at the Evacuation, no fighting had yet occurred in which he could be tested.

Thus, in Birdwood's view, there was no officer of the A.I.F. whom he could suitably recommend for the new commands. There were, however, in Egypt several British generals already recognised as men of outstanding capacity. Two of these were Cox, the hardened, tried, sardonic Anglo-Indian who was already in charge of the new brigades training at Tel el Kebir, and H. A. Lawrence,<sup>28</sup> a British cavalry officer, who, after retiring from the regular army, had joined the yeomanry, and whose services had been much in demand during the Gallipoli campaign. Knowing their reputation Birdwood was anxious to secure both, and on January 31st submitted their names to the Australian Government for the command of the new divisions in Egypt, adding a hope that M'Cay would be given the command of that forming in Australia.

To the Minister and military staff in Australia the fact that no Australian brigadier, even after the experience in Gallipoli, was considered capable of commanding a division came as a surprise and a disappointment. Senator Pearce telegraphed to this effect, and expressed a desire that M'Cay, who was now fairly fit, should receive one of the Egyptian commands. Meanwhile he accepted Cox and Lawrence on condition that one of them awaited the arrival of the 3rd Division from Australia. Birdwood, recognising that this would lose him Lawrence, continued to press his recommendation that M'Cay should take the 3rd, but the Minister remained firm. Among his advisers Colonel Dodds stood out with special stubbornness for the appointment of Australians. He urged that

the appointments of these (British) officers can only have a heart-breaking effect on Australian officers in being debarred from attaining the high distinction. . . . I feel sure that, were this matter made known at the present time, the result would be an expression of public indignation. . . .

With this protest Senator Pearce fully agreed.

<sup>28</sup> Gen. Hon. Sir H. A. Lawrence, G.C.B., p.s.c. C.G.S., British Armies in France, 1918/19. Officer of British Regular Army; of Middlesex, Eng.; b. Southgate, Eng., 8 Aug., 1861. Youngest son of the first Lord Lawrence of Indian Mutiny fame.



At the present time (wrote the Minister) I realize how dangerous it is to unduly interfere with the liberty of action of the G.O.C., General Birdwood, who is on the spot and who knows the capacity of the officers under him, and upon whom will fall the responsibility of any failures due to incompetency of commands. . . .

He telegraphed to Birdwood that, if Lawrence could not be retained for the 3rd, White or Monash should be considered. Accepting this decision, Birdwood asked that the command of the 3rd Division should for the present be allowed to remain vacant, in order that he might have a further chance of testing his brigadiers in France.

The stand taken by the Minister and Colonel Dodds was of importance chiefly because it strengthened Birdwood's inclination to appoint Australians to A.I.F. commands. There is no question that he was already unfeignedly in favour of this policy. Indeed, he went further than White, in that, if he were fairly confident of an Australian's adequacy, he would prefer him to a British officer of greater ability. White, on the other hand, realising deeply the need for good staff work, was actuated by the desire to obtain men of high training and proved quality. It was unavoidable that a number of the higher staff officers, especially of the general staff, should be borrowed from the British, the trained Australian staff being very small and the number of officers to whom the actual planning of operations could be safely entrusted being still few. But in his choice of brigadiers—which had been made before Pearce's protest—and of battalion commanders Birdwood practically restricted himself to officers of the A.I.F.<sup>29</sup> The new brigadiers were Lieutenant-Colonel Elliott of the 7th Battalion (in civil life a Melbourne solicitor), Lieutenant-Colonel Glasgow of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment (a Queensland grazier), Brigadier-General Irving<sup>30</sup> (an Australian permanent officer recently sent from Australia to command the troops at the base),<sup>31</sup> and Lieutenant-Colonel Glasfurd (a British staff officer who had been appointed to the A.I.F. in Australia and had risen to be chief of staff of the 1st Division). The command of the 6th Brigade also becoming

<sup>29</sup> As an instance of the many difficulties with which this matter was surrounded, it was by no means easy for Gen. White, while constantly making requests to the British authorities for general-staff officers, to refuse all offers by them of suitable men for other positions.

<sup>30</sup> Maj.-Gen. G. G. H. Irving. Commanded 14th Inf. Bde., 1916. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; b. Melbourne, 25 Aug., 1867.

<sup>31</sup> See pp. 146-8.



vacant by the appointment of Brigadier-General Gwynn as Godley's chief-of-staff in the I Anzac Corps, the appointment was given to Gellibrand, whose extraordinary influence over officers and men was recognised by Birdwood, though he was not attracted by his outspokenness and unconventional dress. The new brigadiers were all comparatively young men. Several of the older brigadiers originally appointed, but subsequently relieved of active commands, were about this time recalled.

The choice of the sixteen battalion commanders for the new brigades, and of a few others to fill vacant commands of the old battalions, was made by Birdwood and White from among officers recommended by the existing brigadiers. In several cases the appointments were thus given to picked men, either those who had performed outstanding service—such as Leane of the 48th and Cass of the 54th—or young officers of an especially fine character who had come to the front in hard fighting at Anzac, as, for example, Howell-Price of the 3rd and Humphrey Scott of the 56th. Such selections were in every case justified; with Australian material a commander of the right character quickly created a magnificent battalion. But though many proved and splendid young officers of the type of Scott and Price were undoubtedly available among the junior majors and captains, it was held that, in the interests of a contented service, the claims of seniors of satisfactory service, or against whom nothing at present was known, could not be overlooked. This undoubtedly resulted in not a few units being saddled with commanders who were both entirely lacking in the right spirit, or morale, and also incompetent to select subordinates with those qualities. All these commanders were eventually flung out in the stress of actual trial. But in the meantime the preservation of the morale and discipline of a unit too often fell upon the shoulders of some more spirited and high-minded subordinate, usually a company commander. Such battalions began their existence under a heart-breaking disadvantage, and it is at least arguable that the efficiency of the force would have been more quickly achieved had seniority been to a greater extent ignored and the command been given in every case to picked officers, even though of junior rank.

By February 7th all these decisions as to method and personnel having been made, and the main part of the scheme worked out, White was given four days' holiday at Luxor before returning to supervise its execution. On February 12th the first memoranda were issued, and the splitting up of the infantry immediately commenced. The announcement that their beloved units were to be divided came as a blow to all officers and men of the sixteen battalions, but especially to those who two days later found themselves with the "second wings." The greater part of the 1st and 2nd Divisions had by then been working for a fortnight in the desert; but it happened that the 1st Brigade, with which the process began, had, in consequence of the water shortage at Serapeum, been left at Tel el Kebir, where the new brigades were to be formed and trained. A warning that the old battalions were to be split up had been sent to the brigadier on February 10th, and the battalion commanders had learnt the news next day. Action was immediate. Two days were spent by the commander of each battalion in making, with his second-in-command and adjutant, a fair division of the roll of his battalion.<sup>32</sup> The method varied in different battalions, but there was keen interest in the creation of the daughter battalions, and the division was therefore scrupulously fair. In the 12th, Gellibrand, who both as battalion commander and later in higher positions set an outstanding example of "playing the game," completed the division before deciding which wing should form the new battalion and which the old; it was eventually settled in the officers' mess by the toss of a coin.<sup>33</sup> The commander of the 13th created the daughter battalion—the 45th—by simply handing over "two splendid companies."<sup>34</sup> The separation in each case followed immediately. The sight of half the old battalion marching away from the desert camps was distressing in the extreme, not only to the half which was being divorced, but to their former comrades who watched them go. "I felt," said an officer of the 12th, "as though I were having a limb

<sup>32</sup> Gen. Smyth's first order (Feb. 11) was "in view of an early move to the theatre of operations" (probably the Canal theatre was meant) "battalion commanders will select the best trained soldiers for retention in the 1st Brigade." On receiving the full instructions next day, however, this was altered by an order that "companies will be fairly divided into two parts."

<sup>33</sup> *The Twelfth* (History of the 12th Bn.), by L. M. Newton, p. 158.

<sup>34</sup> *The Thirteenth* (History of the 13th Bn.), by Captain T. A. White, p. 58.

amputated without any anæsthetic." In the 1st Brigade at Tel el Kebir, however, the old and new units were for a time camped close to one another. The diary of the 3rd Battalion reads:

February 13 (Sunday). Battalion paraded for various Church Parades. About 11 a.m. word was received that Major McConaghy,<sup>35</sup> C.M.G., and 17 other officers were transferred to the 55th Battalion. The separation of the 3rd Battalion and 55th Battalion was carried out at 6 p.m. The remaining 3rd moved on to a fresh camp site. Major O. G. Howell-Price assumed command.

The new (14th) Brigade was next day officially separated from the 1st. In some units training began that day. The diary of the 56th Battalion (daughter of the 4th) says:

The battalion was formed to-day. Capt. A. J. Simpson, 4th Bn., commands temporarily. . . . Training companies under company commanders as per syllabus. Combined mess of both battalions' officers. 4th Battalion kindly lent two limbers for drawing rations, etc.

Within forty-eight hours both the parent battalions (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th) and the daughter battalions (53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th) had been brought up to strength by trainloads of drafts from Cairo. Meanwhile the other "veteran" brigades out in the desert east of Serapeum were being split up, and their "second wings" sent to Serapeum ready for transfer to Tel el Kebir. In order to economise rolling stock, which was then urgently required for other movements of Murray's divisions, two battalions were to be dealt with every three days, the train which brought from Cairo the reinforcements for the "old" battalions being used to carry back the "second wings" of those battalions to Tel el Kebir. Two days later these "second wings" were expanded by further trainloads of reinforcements. The order of formation was:

14 Feb.: 1, 2, 3, & 4 Bns. split up; and 53, 54, 55, & 56 Bns. formed.

21 Feb.\*: 5 & 6 Bns. split up; 57 & 58 Bns. formed.

24 Feb.: 7 & 8 Bns. split up; 59 & 60 Bns. formed.

27 Feb.: 9 & 10 Bns. split up; 49 & 50 Bns. formed.

1 Mar.: 11 & 12 Bns. split up; 51 & 52 Bns. formed.

4 Mar.: 13 & 14 Bns. split up; 45 & 46 Bns. formed.

7 Mar.: 15 & 16 Bns. split up; 47 & 48 Bns. formed.

\* A delay of three days was caused at this stage by G.H.Q., which had to give precedence to certain other movements on the railways.

<sup>35</sup> Major McConaghy had been the commander of the old 3rd Battalion. The fact that a commander might be transferred to the "second wing" operated as an additional inducement to ensure an absolutely fair division, though such an inducement was hardly necessary.



The new units had heavy work ahead. It is true that in most cases tents had been pitched for them, and their brigade-camp prepared by fatigues of troops already at Tel el Kebir. The brigade staffs had by then been formed, and by General Cox's orders the "second wings," coming by rail from the desert, were met at the camp siding, usually by the brigade-major, and conducted to their camp. Next day each would parade, organising itself as far as possible into the skeleton of a battalion complete except in numbers; on the day following that, the reinforcements would arrive from Cairo, bringing the new battalion practically to full strength, except in officers. There was, however, no regimental transport, and they had for some time to carry all stores by hand. Moreover the large drafts from Cairo were of very raw material. The Lithgow factory in New South Wales having been unable to approach in its output the numbers of rifles required even for training, the reinforcements had not only been sent to Egypt without rifles, but some had never yet held a rifle on parade.<sup>36</sup>

As an example of the manner in which this material was welded into battalions, there may be taken the case of the 56th. Some 450 men under fifteen young officers separated from the 4th Battalion on February 14th. On the evening of the 16th there arrived from Cairo 508 men and three reinforcement officers to complete the unit. Thus the staff of the new battalion, though mostly consisting of veterans of the Landing and Lone Pine, was a mere handful of youngsters. The commander, Major Humphrey Scott of Lone Pine fame,<sup>37</sup> was himself only twenty-four, and, eighteen months before, had been a clerk in Dalgety's office in Sydney. He noted next day: "Men a mixed lot<sup>38</sup> and very raw. Rifle exercise very bad; fixing and unfixing bayonets worse. Men stood surprisingly steady during inspection." Later in the same day

<sup>36</sup> The equipment of most of the reinforcements at this stage was made of leather, and was much inferior to the "web" equipment of previous contingents.

<sup>37</sup> See Vol. II, pp. 538, 540-1, 554.

<sup>38</sup> In the 55th Battalion, on the other hand, the reinforcements were drawn very largely from a single source—a big draft of employees of the N.S.W. railways and tramways. That battalion, to the end of its existence, included a considerable proportion of these men.



he wrote: "Reinforcements worse than first appeared, some 100 never having handled a rifle before." He himself was for the next few days employed in organising the framework of his unit and its headquarters, and in attending brigade conferences concerning the best plan for rapid training; but on the 19th he again noted: "Visited battalion and found great improvement in rifle exercises; they are an undisciplined lot, however." On the 20th, after church parade: "Lack of discipline again apparent, principally accounted for by shortage of officers and N.C.O's." The battalion's camp, however, was found "neat and tidy and rifles in good condition. Men smarter than previously. Kitchens and quartermaster's store clean and orderly." Three days later: "marching improved. Brigadier inspected camp. Quite satisfactory." Next day there was a route march: "men held on with few stragglers." On February 26th the "G.O.C." complimented the battalion on its rifle exercises. During the succeeding fortnight many of the men were still without felt hats and had to parade in caps, and badly-fitting boots accounted for large numbers on sick parade; but the brigadier had commented on the cleanliness of their lines. A regimental sports club had been formed. Moreover, by orders from Headquarters of A. & N.Z. Forces, the new battalions had been permitted to bear on their sleeves the colours of the old battalions, the only difference being that, whereas in the old units these were worn horizontally, in the new they were worn vertically. The shape of these patches was afterwards varied to conform with a system by which the branch or unit of every member of the A.I.F. could be ascertained at a glance.<sup>39</sup> The adoption of the old colours did more than anything else to soften the first bitterness of separation from the parent units, and bound the daughter and parent battalions even

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<sup>39</sup> In the infantry the shape of the patch indicated the division, the lower or rearmost colour the brigade, and the upper or foremost colour the battalion. The complete system is shown in diagrams at the end of this volume. The 6th Division, whose colours are included, was partly formed in England in 1917 but never sent to France. In the 4th Division, the 12th and 13th Infantry Brigades at first wore vertically the colours of the parent battalions; the circular patch was, however, adopted in Feb. 1917. The 4th Brigade, being part of the original Anzac landing-force, was allowed to retain to the end the old shape of its colour patch.

more closely together in a relationship which remained firm throughout the war. In the 56th, as in all the new and the reconstituted battalions, the shortage of officers was at first a great handicap. During the first fortnight of March, however, to the fifteen who had been received from the 4th Battalion, and the three who had arrived with the reinforcements, there were added a captain of the light horse, two infantry subalterns from the 2nd Division, and seven N.C.O's and privates, mostly picked from light horse regiments and—after a month's trial—promoted to commissions. By the middle of March the 56th, with its youthful personnel (though with a strong Anzac seasoning), its sports fund, and the beginnings of its band, was, though still very raw, in a fair way to become as fine a unit of infantry as any in the A.I.F.

The raw material for the battalions being—as always in the A.I.F.—very nearly even, whatever part of Australia it came from, the quality of the new units was likely to depend almost entirely on their officers, especially the regimental commanders. Some of these, as has already been stated, were, in the opinion of their brigadiers, too elderly or otherwise unsuitable. Several of the brigadiers, themselves men of strong character, determined almost from the first to secure changes in their subordinates. Both Glasfurd and Gellibrand, whose great value as commanders lay largely in their accurate judgment of men and their strength in enforcing their judgments, obtained by gradual process subordinates of whom they approved. Elliott characteristically attempted within a fortnight of his appointment to replace three of his four battalion commanders by younger men of whom he had some knowledge, at the same time reorganising his brigade (the 15th) to correspond exactly with the 15th Brigade in the Australian home-defence force. This precipitancy, and a somewhat head-strong method of making his demands, brought him immediately into conflict with Birdwood and White; but, though forced for the time being to accept the officers allotted to him, he eventually had his way, and undoubtedly succeeded in producing a brigade marked for its fighting spirit and *esprit-de-corps*.

For the provision of junior officers, who were required in very large numbers—the parent and daughter battalions each wanting half their complement, and many hundreds also being needed for artillery, pioneers, engineers, and other services—brigadiers and unit commanders were allowed to obtain suitable candidates not only by searching through the whole of the infantry but also from other arms, especially the light horse. The method of providing officers for the A.I.F. was at this time becoming settled, it having been laid down in Australia that, with a few recognised exceptions,<sup>40</sup> no candidate was to be commissioned unless he had first enlisted and qualified in the way open to all others. Thus in Australia as well as at the front practically all commissions, except those given to Duntroon graduates, must henceforth be obtained from the ranks. Battalion commanders searched their companies for men of outstanding character and sufficient education; these, whether sent away as “cadets” to an officers’ school (as was shortly to become the usual practice), or promoted in the field, did not as a rule change their battalion, but became officers over their old comrades—a practice entirely opposed to the practice in the British Army. This difference was rooted in the deeper dissimilarity between the conditions of English and Australian society. The traditional respect of a British soldier for his officer being admittedly based partly on class distinction, it would not readily be accorded to a “ranker” by his old mates. In the A.I.F., however, as in the Australian people, such distinctions hardly existed at all, and though it was found that, for good discipline, a newly commissioned officer must break with his old associates, the break was no different from that which happens between school-mates at a great public school when one of them becomes a prefect. As a rule the newly appointed officer gave a dinner in the nearest town—a “last night”—to his old mates, and from that time forward their relations were formal. A few men on promotion found it difficult to maintain this attitude, or failed through lack of character, but their proportion was very small. The officers of the A.I.F. were a strong and determined set, and were never separated

<sup>40</sup> For example, the small annual quota of Duntroon graduates; also officers of the Commonwealth forces or cadets who were such on or before 1 Jan., 1915.



from their men by any marked distinction in comfort and mess luxuries. The result—deliberately aimed at—was, in all well-commanded units, a really close friendship between them and their men. These qualities, obvious in 1916 when the officer corps was so greatly expanding, were to become even more marked in later years, when the difficulty of obtaining suitable officers under the British system was admittedly increasing.

At this particular stage, however, the frequent combing of units for men with the character and education for leadership had, in the opinion of some commanders, rendered them difficult to obtain.<sup>41</sup> As a result there occurred during the last two weeks of February such competition to secure good officers that Glasfurd, himself punctiliously considerate of the needs of others, noted:

Some C.O's and even Brigade Commanders exceeded the limits of courtesy and common-sense by sending emissaries to my lines (*i.e.*, those of the 12th Brigade, itself one of the new formations) to offer my officers better positions in other units.

Nearly three-quarters of the men in both "veteran" and new battalions were now reinforcements. Had it been possible to give these units a clear course of eight or even six weeks' training, they would rapidly have become compact efficient units. But the work was hampered by the formation, at this stage, of several important services newly added to the British Army. For military works requiring for their construction training less expert than that of engineers, but more skilled than that of infantry, "pioneer battalions" were being formed<sup>42</sup>—one for each infantry division. These, though organised as infantry, were not intended, except in emergencies, to live in the trenches, but usually came up for their daily, or nightly, task, returning to their camps or billets when it was ended.

<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note that, in securing the host of new officers required, commanders in the 1st and 14th (N.S.W.) Brigades—who themselves had originally been selected by MacLaurin partly on social grounds—had recourse largely to the light horse, in which a larger proportion of youngsters educated at the great public schools were serving in the ranks. On the other hand, the Victorian brigadiers such as Elliott, and most commanders whose brigades were drawn from the other States—MacLagan, Monash, Glasfurd—selected their subalterns from their own infantry. Glasgow, himself a light horseman, brought in a number of officers from the light horse. While the youngsters thus picked from the light horse made magnificent officers, it cannot be observed that their units in any way surpassed those officered by men selected from the infantry, among whom "state school" boys were probably more numerous. As has already so often been pointed out, variations in the value of a unit depended, far more than on any other factor, upon the strength and moral character of the commanding officer.

<sup>42</sup> Acting on his Indian experience, Lord Kitchener in 1914 included in the organisation of his new divisions provision for pioneer battalions. They were in August 1915 introduced in the territorial—and, later, in the regular—divisions.



A second new service was that of the machine-gunners. An air-cooled automatic rifle, known as the "Lewis gun," was at this time being introduced into the British Army, to be used as an infantry weapon in place of the much heavier water-cooled and tripod-borne Maxim or Vickers machine-gun. The heavier machine-guns (lately increased from two to four per battalion) were to be taken from the infantry and allotted to specially formed machine-gun companies, one company in each brigade. In addition to these two important services—then being formed throughout the British Army—Birdwood determined, in response to an enquiry from the War Office, to form certain units, which none of the new Australian divisions so far possessed, for dealing with supplies on the lines of communication. No definite arrangement had been or ever was made between the British and Dominion Governments as to what services each would provide,<sup>43</sup> but Birdwood was now forced to consider the matter. He and White recognised that the A.I.F. could not supply all the L. of C. units necessary for its existence, and they therefore adopted, both now and later, the principle of forming—subject to the approval of the Australian Government—all those which were essential if the force was to be autonomous. Birdwood accordingly undertook to raise thirteen dépôt units of supply (that is, small clerical units for dépôts on the lines of communication), two field butcheries, and two field bakeries. Sanitary sections for five divisions had also to be provided. On top of this the artillery—as will be explained later—had again to be nearly doubled. To form these new units, every battalion had, first, to detach its machine-gunners; second, to provide about fifty tradesmen and pick-and-shovel men for the divisional pioneers; third, to furnish volunteers for the bakeries and other supply units. In addition each battalion of the newly formed divisions had to provide 100 men suitable for the artillery. The interruptions thus caused to training and organisation were almost heart-breaking to the regimental officers of the new units. Moreover, training was further delayed by mumps and measles, and by other childish

<sup>43</sup> In July 1915 the Australian Government asked whether it was desired that Australia should supply a complete medical service "and make full provision for all Australian invalids," adding that it would be pleased to do so. The War Office replied that this was not desired, but that it would welcome any contributions which Australia was prepared to furnish.

epidemics to which Australian soldiers, having seldom suffered from them in childhood, were especially subject. Nevertheless, under that wise commander, General Cox, who to a large extent grounded their discipline upon a strict and sensible training in sanitation, the greater part of the two new divisions was ready for service on the Canal within six weeks.

The units emerging from this reorganisation were full of high hopes and keenness to learn; but that their discipline was not of the sort which commended itself to Murray, or to others reared in a similar atmosphere, goes almost without saying. Murray's own headquarters were now opposite Ferry Post, near Ismailia, in the centre of the Anzac area. A high officer, whether riding with his pennoned orderlies or driving in his car, was always an object of curiosity, to be stared at with frank interest as one of the many shows of those interesting times; but only a few thought of according him the salute on which British discipline insisted. The Commander-in-Chief was constantly passing untidily dressed men, lounging on the footpaths. Those on the roads were not infrequently seen violating sound military rules against cantering horses along the road or riding on horse-transport waggon. Troubles occurred even at the officers' club. While none of these offences were entirely peculiar to the Australian force,<sup>44</sup> Murray could not help observing that they were far more general in that force than in any other. In particular, the failure of the troops to salute him—though no real discourtesy was intended—must have been felt almost as a whiplash by the Commander-in-Chief. Apparently from the unguarded and foolish boasting of some of the officers, he concluded—probably with justification—that the Australians had conceived the notion that they were superior to the general run of the troops in Egypt. Maxwell also had experienced constant trouble with the Australians—his letters frequently refer to it; but he had been wise enough to recognise that a good deal of it was unimportant. So seriously, however, did Murray regard their shortcomings that he drafted to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff in London a letter of which, in the second week of February, he sent a copy to Birdwood. This letter, which was overwhelmingly damning, referring

<sup>44</sup> There was a good deal of trouble—more sanitary than disciplinary—among British troops in Port Said.

to the extreme indiscipline and inordinate vanity of the Australians, was handed by Birdwood to White, who at once urged that if the letter represented Murray's considered opinion of the value of Australian troops for service in France, then, in justice to Australia, the opinion should be made known officially to the Commonwealth Government. Such a "reference" from one commander to another could not, White protested, be properly withheld from the government supplying the troops, which might thus have an opportunity of considering whether a force of such a character should not be withdrawn from France. Whether Robertson received Murray's letter—either altered or unaltered—is not known. The incident was, however, followed in Egypt by results of some importance. Birdwood wrote to Godley strongly urging the need for better discipline, and especially stricter observance of the rules as to neatness of dress and the saluting of officers, which, he insisted, were not small matters, especially if the troops were destined for France. Godley distributed this letter to his officers, covered by one from himself:

Our future now undoubtedly depends on the impression in these matters which we give to those highest in authority, and it is by such things as the appearance and bearing of the men, the turn out and efficiency of guards, . . . that battalions are judged.

In France, he added, the Canadians were now second to none in discipline, smartness, and efficiency. In addition to these warnings Murray himself, on the occasion of his second inspection of the desert lines of the 1st and 2nd Divisions, spoke strongly to the various commanders, hinting that he would be unable to recommend that such troops should be sent to France, where their behaviour, especially towards the French people, and their courtesy in saluting French and British officers, would be matters of real consequence. In the 1st Division Chauvel immediately called a conference of brigadiers and battalion commanders at railhead. The opinion of this conference was that "men who disgrace the Australian uniform are a small minority, well known to company officers." It was accordingly decided to classify the troops into two categories:—

those who can be relied on to behave themselves, and those that have proved unreliable. In the event of the division being ordered for service in Europe, the latter category will be drafted into training battalions in Egypt with a view to further training.



This decision was a weak one, since men whose character was such that it was desirable to discard them should have been sent back to Australia for discharge, and not to the training battalions, which were the reserve of reinforcements. The sequel, which was not unimportant, will be described in its place.<sup>45</sup> A further result of Birdwood's letter was that unit commanders began to insist upon their men dressing correctly and saluting officers. At Anzac these practices had come to be regarded as immaterial—which they really were, provided that cleanliness, order, and obedience were maintained by other means. Men of the A.I.F. were never in the least convinced by the explanation generally given of the need for saluting—that it was “an honour paid to the King's uniform.” Its true import, as was explained by General Cox to his officers, lay rather in the fact that it was a constant admission by the men of that subordination and readiness to obey which are the first essentials in war. For the purpose of instilling and maintaining obedience the practice was useful, if not overdone. The British regulations, however, insisted upon this observance between soldiers and officers, wherever met, to a degree which was not enforced in all armies—in the French, for example—and which to Australians appeared humiliating. The attitude of any troops towards the observances of military discipline depends largely upon the environment and conventions among which they have been brought up. Where a political system contains elements of feudalism—which was directly evolved out of an army-system, the leaders and officers in war becoming in peace-time a class apart, to which, in recognition of its spirit and its responsibilities, reverence and a measure of obedience were rendered—men naturally take readily to the forms of military subordination; and at the time of the Great War the political system of England, though democratic in form, was still largely feudal in practice and tradition. General deference was still paid by other sections of the nation to the classes from which military officers were primarily drawn; and, although those classes were relatively small, the responsibility for government, and especially for leadership in the army

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<sup>45</sup> See Chap. x; and footnote 3 on p. 73.



and navy, was still largely in their hands. Forms of military subordination, such as saluting, therefore came more easily to English soldiers, the majority of whom had been brought up to consider themselves inferior, socially and mentally, to their officers. It is possible that, if the war had lasted for a generation, even the most advanced of modern democracies would have found themselves evolving a system of recognised social classes based upon the qualities which made for leadership in war. The beginnings from which such a system might conceivably have developed were distinctly observable in the A.I.F. before the war ended. Nevertheless it may be doubted whether a society constituted on lines of military subordination, even if such a condition is inevitable in war, will produce, in the generations after the war, the most efficient leaders or the best material for soldiers. Where officers are as a matter of custom largely selected from a comparatively restricted class, the limit placed upon competition tends to reduce the level of ability; and, where the pretension to leadership is generally forgone by the largest section of the community, the qualities of decision and initiative, normally developed by men who freely determine their own actions, are apt to become atrophied. Paradoxical though it may appear, there is reason for believing that, while the feudal principles of subordination are favourable to the orderly control of an army in war-time—and, indeed, the more closely the individual regiments of the A.I.F. adhered to these forms, the better regiments they were—yet genuine democratic equality will in peace-time produce a stronger raw material. It probably follows that the democracy is subject to a correspondingly greater need for training its soldiers to the subordination which is a first essential in war, and possibly the process is more difficult. But the precise forms of discipline suited for a nation imbued with the feudal tradition were not found to be, in their entirety, well suited for such people as Australians, among whom the sharp social distinctions and inequalities of the older nations are practically non-existent.

It must not be imagined that the average Australian soldier, whose discipline was at this stage a matter of such concern, had any articulate conception of these principles.

Like a colt from a large paddock, he at first resented all restraint, and the true objection to the adoption of British rules as to saluting was that, even when he had been adequately tamed, over-insistence upon this practice—when, for example, he was on leave in London—seemed to him mere pin-pricking. As, however, the Australians were to serve among British troops, the authorities of the A.I.F. were not free to allow of practices which might be suitable exclusively to their fellow-countrymen; the greatest measure of punctiliousness was obviously desirable. A strong effort was accordingly made at this stage to enforce saluting. In the 3rd Battalion, for example, Howell-Price instituted “saluting drill,” to be carried out “individually and by squads,” sometimes for an hour on end. In Holmes’s 5th Brigade there was adopted a “saluting scheme,” under which a captain walked through the town and men who passed him without saluting had their names taken by N.C.O.’s told off for the purpose. Adherence to the regulation dress was also enforced. Men were prevented from wearing “shorts,” and Colonel Elliott, in an order relating to the proper rolling of blankets and to the carrying of more than the regulation kit, laid it down that his battalion commanders

will send for court-martial any man disregarding any orders of this kind, and also any platoon and section commanders who wilfully connive at such breaches of discipline. . . .

In the case of the older troops, who had grown accustomed to what they considered the vagaries of military authorities, these measures had the effect of gradually weaning them from the laxness of Anzac. But in some of the units which had not seen service, this insistence upon what seemed to the men utterly trivial formalities and unnecessary indignities caused strong feeling. In the 6th Field Company, newly arrived from Australia, the result was (as one of its members recorded) some of the “blackest days in the company’s history” and “a dreadful state of misunderstanding between officers and the men”—only to be dispelled when they found themselves a few weeks later marching together towards the trenches on the Western Front.

Besides the difficulties of formal discipline there were others caused by the presence in the A.I.F. of a proportion of “hard cases” and of bad characters. The former—the

men in the ranks who drank heavily when they could get the liquor—though troublesome, did not necessarily make bad soldiers in battle.<sup>46</sup> But at Tel el Kebir it had become obvious that there had also been enlisted a certain number of criminals, some of whom had entered the force with the intention of running gambling “schools” or of escaping from punishment in Australia.<sup>47</sup> As time went on it was found that many of these men had no intention of reaching the firing line. They were a mere handful in number, and gradually became well known to their officers and their comrades; but their presence, now first noted, was the cause of atrocities which occasionally blackened the name of Australia. As the Australian Government about the middle of 1916 indicated that its policy was against the return of men to Australia for disciplinary reasons, the A.I.F. was forced as far as possible to digest its own bad characters, and the existence of these men afforded a problem increasing in difficulty as the war went on.

As a step towards dealing with this side of the problem Murray appointed on his own staff a special Australian assistant-provost-marshal, and under this officer the whole of the police of the A.I.F. were shortly afterwards formed as a separate corps, comprising two companies of footmen and a mounted squadron. The measure was not, however, completely successful, neither Murray’s staff nor Birdwood having grasped the fact that, for a “provost corps,” officers of exceptionally fine character were required. The higher authorities—British and Australian—tended occasionally to rely on a bombastic and even brutal type of police officer, with the result that the Australian police corps came more than once into grave scandal. Steps were afterwards taken to ensure that practically all men in the provost corps had at least some field service, and in Egypt further scandal was eventually avoided by placing at its head Major Bisdee,<sup>48</sup> a Tasmanian who had won the Victoria Cross in the South African War, and whose character was known and respected throughout the A.I.F.

<sup>46</sup> A heavy-drinking officer, however, was always a danger and a source of demoralisation.

<sup>47</sup> In the boredom of camp life, if other recreation was not sufficiently provided, soldiers tended to spend their whole time gambling. At dusk the line of Arabi’s old rampart at Tel el Kebir was crowded with groups of Australians playing “two up.”

<sup>48</sup> Lieut.-Col. J. H. Bisdee, V.C., O.B.E.; 12th L.H. Regt. A.P.M., A.I.F. in Egypt, 1918/19. Pastoralist and farmer; of Green Ponds district, Tas.; b. Hutton Park, Tas, 28 Sept., 1869.



These reforms were in progress; some of the British divisions were still concentrating or being re-equipped; the new Australian divisions were forming, and the others were working in the desert and awaiting an advance of the Turks; Murray had planned fully to meet Robertson's demands by retaining all divisions until March and then commencing to send six of them to Europe: then, on February 21st, the whole position was suddenly changed by the great German attack upon Verdun. On the 26th Murray received from Robertson a "clear-the-line" telegram—

We find it necessary that we should give the French early proof of our intention to support them in every visible way.

Murray at once promised to send troops, the 31st Division to embark first, followed by the 29th and 11th. His message was answered by one from Robertson, asking him to rush on his preparations for sending five or six divisions.

Things at Verdun going none too well. . . . We must accordingly be prepared to risk something in Egypt. . . . Originally it was intended by you and us that the Australians should come (to France) first, but they have gradually taken fourth place.<sup>49</sup> Do not allow idea of forming an Australian army to influence matters as that cannot materialise in any case for months, and you should generally work on the principle that three Australian divisions in France in April may be worth six at a later date. . . .

Events in France, he added, seemed likely to move rapidly in the next three months, whereas there appeared to be no danger of an attack on any large scale against Egypt.

Murray agreed; the capture of Erzerum by Russia had made that danger more remote. He promised to send the six divisions "as fast as the Admiralty can provide ships."

I have no wish to keep back the Australians (he stated) or to form them into an army. I have latterly placed them in order of departure behind the British divisions because they are most backward in training and discipline, and I am trying to wheel them into line.

Murray undoubtedly regarded his Anzac divisions at this time as less fit for service than any in Egypt except the Territorial—which were short of men and, in most cases, less well staffed or commanded. On February 10th he had placed

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<sup>49</sup> Robertson on Feb. 9 had cabled asking Murray which six divisions were likely to be first ready—if possible, some of them in March. He added—"29th Division comes first for consideration, and then Australians and New Zealanders." Murray in his reply had agreed with this order.



them second in order of sailing: "Order of Divisions—29th, three Anzac Divisions, 31st, 11th." On the 18th he had cabled that he now thought the 31st had better follow the 29th.

It is a very good division and has done . . . better work than any other division in my command.

It was to this division and to a brigade of yeomanry that he had so far entrusted the key-sector of the Canal defences—that facing the northern or coastal route into Palestine. He had now marked the 11th Division also for departure before the Anzac divisions; but, as he indicated that his remaining infantry, consisting of four Territorial divisions (42nd, 52nd, 53rd, and 54th), would be dangerously weak, the War Office gave him permission to hold back this division. Nevertheless his telegraphed reason for postponing the departure of the Anzac divisions was, like some others of his written statements, utterly misleading, since it contained no reference to the fact that, within the past month, two of them had been called on to convert themselves into four,<sup>50</sup> all containing a large majority of reinforcements. The British divisions—except for the formation of machine-gun companies and a slight expansion or re-grouping of artillery—had been merely training and refitting.

Orders were issued for the 31st Division to embark immediately, and the 29th on March 6th. Although the reorganisation of the Anzac forces had begun only a fortnight previously, it was proceeding along such smooth lines that Murray was able, on February 29th, to warn Birdwood that the I Anzac Corps would be required to begin moving to France within two weeks. At the same time, in accordance with the desire of the War Office, Murray decided that the Australian and New Zealand artillery must be brought up to the scale adopted for all "New Army" divisions then proceeding to France.

It is probable that neither Murray nor the War Office fully appreciated the task which they were setting the Anzac artillery by insisting upon this expansion. It is true that New Army divisions were at this stage being permitted to go to the front short of one howitzer battery; that is to say, the

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<sup>50</sup> That is, the 1st and N.Z. & A. into the 1st, N.Z., 4th, and 5th.

howitzer brigade was allowed to consist of three batteries instead of four. But, even so, the Australian artillery, which on February 18th had comprised only eighteen batteries and had since been increased to thirty-six, was now, at the end of the month, required to expand to sixty. There was only one way by which this could be done: the older divisions, which were to go to France, must be equipped by robbing the new. The latter would have again to set about raising their artillery, and would inevitably be delayed by the process; but Robertson's telegram had indicated that, if the arrival of the I Anzac Corps could thereby be hastened, this delay must be incurred. This course Murray therefore adopted, overriding the protests of Birdwood and White. His action was probably right, although some ill consequences were felt in the Battle of Fromelles. The 1st and 2nd Divisions absorbed the two artillery brigades which they were forming for the 4th and 5th Divisions, and also took back the two brigades which they had lent them. This gave the 1st and 2nd each their full quota of field-gun batteries. For their howitzer batteries men had to be obtained from the ammunition columns and elsewhere, and taken to France untrained.

At the time when this heavy increase in the artillery was ordered, the pioneer battalions, machine-gun companies, bakeries, butcheries, and dépôt units of supply were also just being created. Steps were taken to complete their formation while the 1st and 2nd Divisions were actually concentrating prior to leaving Egypt.<sup>51</sup> The two new divisions at Tel el Kebir were at this stage robbed of practically all their artillery; but they were otherwise so complete that it was possible for Murray to order that, when the 1st and 2nd left, the 4th and 5th should take their places and continue training on the

<sup>51</sup> The MACHINE-GUN COMPANIES were easily formed, chiefly by the transfer from the battalions of the old regimental machine-gunners; after these men had left the battalions their places were taken by teams of Lewis gunners (seven men to each of the four guns allotted to the battalion). Lewis gunners could be quickly trained, an officer and N.C.C. of each battalion being specially sent to a training school at Ismailia, afterwards instructing the Lewis gun teams of their unit.

To provide a skilled nucleus for his four PIONEER BATTALIONS, Birdwood proposed to break up a mining battalion which, it was understood, was sailing from Australia about the beginning of March. The remainder of each pioneer battalion would be formed by volunteers from the divisions. The MINING BATTALION, however, had been formed for a particular purpose on the suggestion of Professors David and Skeats, who had urged that the exceptional resources of Australia in miners, mining engineers, and special machinery should be utilised at the Dardanelles or elsewhere. An offer was accordingly made to the British Government

Canal. In the meantime, in order to advance the training of the divisions ordered to France, they were directed to relieve twenty-five per cent. of their men from work on the Canal defence-line and to put them through a hurried course in the desert.<sup>52</sup> As the 2nd Division, being the one least affected by the reorganisation, was to go first, its artillery, part of which was now in gun-positions behind the desert line, was practised for the first time at shooting.

On March 5th and 6th the two divisions began to move in from the desert.<sup>53</sup> As there was no apprehension of the enemy attacking, the whole of the actual front line of the corps was, by order of G.H.Q., handed over to two brigades of the Anzac Mounted Division, which were to garrison it until relieved by the 4th and 5th Divisions. Among the men of the 1st and 2nd it was not yet generally known whither they were moving. Many still thought that their destination might be Salonica, although lectures to the officers upon "gas precautions" and "billeting" seemed to point to a

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and accepted, and much enthusiasm was spent in providing the unit with special machinery. This corps, under the command of Lt.-Col. Fewtrell, sailed in March direct for England. Senator Pearce, on receiving Birdwood's proposal that it should be broken up as a nucleus for the pioneers, cabled to the War Office asking that "in view of the expense and ingenuity which created it for a particular purpose," this should not be done. The War Office had, however, no intention of employing the corps otherwise than for mining. Birdwood, upon being informed that it was not available, ordered the pioneer battalions, then at three-quarter strength, to be completed from troops available in Egypt. (The subsequent history of the Mining Battalion will be given in *Vol. IV* of this series. See also *index to this volume*.)

The divisional commanders, to whom the raising of the PIONEER BATTALIONS had been delegated, had ordered each of their three infantry brigades to provide one company comprising a specified number of tradesmen, and the balance "pick and shovel" men. Some infantry battalion commanders did not neglect this opportunity to exercise a certain short-sighted "cleverness," traditional among old soldiers, by passing on to the divisional pioneer battalion a large proportion of their indisciplined or difficult men, thus saddling several of these important units from their birth with an undue proportion of bad characters. Fortunately there were many commanders of a higher type who, like Gellibrand of the 6th Brigade, insisted upon carefully picking out "the best and most qualified men," and specifically ordered that "no man of bad character" should be handed on to the pioneers. To each of these new units there was allotted a commander (generally a major from the infantry), four other infantry officers, and one from the engineers. The commander had a slow and difficult task, selecting for his other officers infantrymen or engineers with high-class engineering or mining experience, and then setting to work to break down the notion among his own men that their battalion was merely a labour unit. By these means a high spirit was instilled into these fine battalions, their reputation spreading and a real approach being made to their ideal—"that a battalion of Australian pioneers was as good as a battalion of engineers." Actually the five Australian pioneer battalions were always regarded in the force as akin to engineer units, and more closely resembled the American "engineer regiments" than any units in the British organisation, with the possible exception of the Scottish pioneer battalions.

<sup>52</sup> This included musketry, bomb-throwing, and attacking with bayonets from a line of trenches. Rifle ranges were laid down in front of the line.

<sup>53</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 168. The New Zealand Division from Moascar changed places for a few days with the 2nd, marching to Ferry Post, but not taking over the desert line.



transfer to France. During the short period of concentration at Moascar and Serapeum, however, while hurried endeavours were being made to put some polish on the force, Birdwood visited one brigade after another, generally at church parade, and appealed to the men to uphold the good name of Australia among the people of France. They would be going among the homes of a people whose young men were mostly fighting for their country, but whose old men, women, and children would be living in the countryside which the Australians would occupy. He appealed to the men's honour to ensure that—both among these helpless people, and among the British, Canadian, and French soldiers—the good name which they had won on Gallipoli should be untarnished. The troops, in spite of their external cynicism, were strongly affected by these speeches. Birdwood in those days was at the height of his popularity; and, as he rode through the lines with the Prince of Wales—who was then serving in Egypt, and came for the first time among Australians—the warmth of feeling shown towards him was as whole-hearted as that which was always evoked in men of the A.I.F. by the natural boyish friendliness of the King's son.

The 2nd Australian Division began to leave on March 13th, the troops being sent by night and mostly in open trucks to Alexandria, where they at once embarked. The artillery took their horses and harness, but left their guns, these being required in Egypt. The transport similarly left their waggons. Guns and waggons were to be supplied anew in France, as was also the regular motor-transport, which the Australians in Egypt did not possess.<sup>54</sup> The 7th Infantry Brigade went first, followed by the 5th and 6th with the artillery, and by some 3,000 reinforcements who would be held in readiness at the 2nd Divisional Dépôt at the Base in France. The 1st Division followed, starting to embark on March 21st. On the 28th the staffs of the I and II Anzac Corps exchanged their designations. Godley, to whom Birdwood had delegated certain administrative powers over the A.I.F. in Egypt, remained at Ismailia to command the 4th and 5th Divisions, now forming the II Corps; Birdwood, who hitherto had

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<sup>54</sup> Certain Australian motor-transport had, however, been sent to England, and was already serving in France. (*See footnote 26, pp. 115-6.*)



nominally commanded the II Corps, embarked for France with the I Corps on March 29th.<sup>55</sup> During the past few days White, having completed the formation of the last units of

<sup>55</sup> See p. 153. The staff of the A.I.F. about this time is shown in *Chap. vi*. Those of the two Anzac corps and of the 1st and 2nd Divisions were:

#### I ANZAC CORPS.

Lieutenant-General Sir W. R. Birdwood, commanding. Captain H. Champion de Crespigny, Indian Army, and Captain R. G. Chirnside, **A.I.F.** (*Aides-de-camp*); Brigadier-General C. B. B. White, **A.I.F.**, Major S. S. Butler, South Staffordshire Regiment, Major R. B. Smythe, N.Z. Staff Corps, Captain C. M. Kennedy, Herts. Regiment, Lieutenant H. G. Trust, Intelligence Corps, Lieutenant J. J. W. Herbertson, Honourable Artillery Company (*General Staff*); Brigadier-General R. A. Carruthers, Indian Army, Lieutenant-Colonel M. G. Taylor, R.E., Lieutenant-Colonel S. G. Gibbs, R.A.S.C., Captain J. G. MacConaghy, Indian Army (*Administrative Staff*); Brigadier-General C. Cunliffe Owen, R.A. (*Artillery*); Brigadier-General A. C. de L. Joly de Lotbinière, R.E. (*Engineers*); Major L. L. Evans, R.E. (*Signals*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Austin, A.O.D. (*Ordnance*); Colonel C. C. Manifold, Indian Medical Services, and Major A. G. Butler, **A.I.F.** (*Medical*); Lieutenant A. W. Ross, **A.I.F.** (*Postal*); Major J. Williams, **A.I.F.** (*Police*); Major J. S. S. Churchill, Oxford Yeomanry (*Camp Commandant*); Lieutenant G. Levy, French Army (*Interpreter*); Lieutenant P. E. Coleman, **A.I.F.** (*Superintending Clerk*).

#### II ANZAC CORPS.

Lieutenant-General Sir A. J. Godley, commanding. Lieutenant C. B. A. Jackson, Suffolk Yeomanry, and Lieutenant C. Gordon, Scottish Horse Yeomanry (*Aides-de-camp*); Brigadier-General C. W. Gwynn, R.E., Major W. Marriott-Dodington, Oxfordshire and Bucks. Light Infantry, Captain M. C. Ferrers-Guy, Lancashire Fusiliers, Lieutenant T. C. Macaulay, R.F.A. (*General Staff*); Brigadier-General A. E. Delavoye, R.A.S.C., Lieutenant-Colonel A. Erskine-Murray, R.A., Captain F. A. U. Pickering, 2nd Dragoons (*Administrative Staff*); Brigadier-General W. D. Nichol, R.A. (*Artillery*); Brigadier-General W. B. Lesslie, R.E. (*Engineers*); Major W. T. Dodd, R.E. (*Signals*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Howell-Jones, A.O.D. (*Ordnance*); Colonel R. E. Roth, **A.I.F.**, and Major C. W. Thompson, **A.I.F.** (*Medical*); Lieutenant E. S. Hazeldine, **A.I.F.** (*Postal*); Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Tatham, South African Defence Force (*Police*); Captain the Hon. M. B. Parker, Reserve of Officers, ex Grenadier Guards (*Camp Commandant*).

#### 1ST AUSTRALIAN DIVISION.

Major-General H. B. Walker, commanding. Captain T. Hastie, **A.I.F.**, and Lieutenant A. E. Dean, **A.I.F.** (*Aides-de-camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel A. H. Bridges, Indian Army, Major L. F. Ashburner, Royal Fusiliers, Captain R. G. Casey, **A.I.F.** (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. Foott, **A.I.F.**, Major G. C. Somerville, **A.I.F.**, Captain T. G. Millner, **A.I.F.**, Captain R. A. Ramsay, **A.I.F.** (*Administrative Staff*); Brigadier-General J. J. T. Hobbs, **A.I.F.** (*Artillery*); Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Martyn, **A.I.F.** (*Engineers*); Captain G. G. S. Gordon, **A.I.F.** (*Signals*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. T. Marsh, R.A.S.C. (*Supply & Transport*); Colonel A. H. Sturdee, **A.I.F.**, and Major J. Espie Dods, **A.I.F.** (*Medical*); Major T. Matson, **A.I.F.** (*Veterinary*); Captain J. C. Kininmonth, **A.I.F.** (*Ordnance*); Lieutenant G. F. Mason (*Police*).

#### 2ND AUSTRALIAN DIVISION.

Major-General J. G. Legge, commanding. Captain F. K. Officer and Lieutenant A. C. Colman, **A.I.F.** (*Aides-de-Camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. N. Jackson, Border Regiment, Major L. F. Arthur, Indian Army, Captain B. V. Mair, Manchester Regiment (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel T. A. Blamey, **A.I.F.**, Major J. L. Whitham, **A.I.F.**, Major S. Bruggy, **A.I.F.** (*Administrative Staff*); Brigadier-General G. J. Johnston, **A.I.F.** (*Artillery*); Major S. F. Newcombe, R.E. (*Engineers*); Captain S. H. Watson, **A.I.F.** (*Signals*); Major C. H. E. Manning, **A.I.F.** (*Supply & Transport*); Colonel A. Sutton, **A.I.F.**, and Major H. K. Fry, **A.I.F.** (*Medical*); Major L. C. Whitfield, **A.I.F.** (*Veterinary*); Major E. T. Leane, **A.I.F.** (*Ordnance*); Captain B. G. Brown, **A.I.F.** (*Police*).

The staff of the 3rd Division is shown in *Chap vi*; those of the 4th, 5th, and Anzac Mounted Divisions in *Chap x*.

the field army, had drawn up and filled the establishments for the training dépôt, which for the time being was to remain in Egypt. Certain important questions concerning the base and control of the A.I.F. remained still undecided;<sup>56</sup> but the great work of expansion was finished. Within six weeks of its inauguration the 1st and 2nd Divisions were on their way to France; the New Zealand Division was preparing to follow them; the new 4th and 5th Divisions were actually marching to the Canal, and the Anzac Mounted Division was assembling there. Australia was now maintaining a force of nearly 100,000, and when the 3rd Division—then forming in Australia—had arrived, the number would be reached which, in the opinion of the Australian Government, would represent the country's full effort. But it is interesting to note that the new divisions had in fact been provided not from the 50,000 men (or three divisions) promised by the Hughes Government after considering the War Census, but from the flood of recruits who had come forward during the previous months, when Australians first began generally to recognise the vastness of the Allies' task and their own responsibility for assisting to shoulder it.

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<sup>56</sup> See p. 149 *et seq.*

## CHAPTER III

### THE ARRIVAL IN FRANCE

ENEMY submarines were active in the Mediterranean during the passage of the I Anzac Corps from Alexandria to Marseilles. The transports, most of which now carried a gun on the poop, sailed singly, and were escorted part of the way by destroyers or sloops. Guards of soldiers, stationed on the upper decks, kept watch for any sign of a periscope. The notion was that the guard might at least give warning, and that the splash raised by bullets falling round the enemy's periscope might impede his view. The troops observed the then universal precautions: in the day-time they wore their life-belts, and at night used them as pillows. During the dark the ships moved without any light visible from outside, all dead-lights being shut. At 9.30 a.m. on March 23rd, the *Minnewaska*, carrying the 5th Field Artillery Brigade, and the *Lake Michigan* with the 24th Battalion, received a wireless message: "*Minneapolis* torpedoed"; and at 12.30 p.m.: "still sinking." At 3.30 next day at about the same spot the *Caledonian*, carrying the 2nd Divisional Train, passed the *Minneapolis* in tow of a destroyer and surrounded by a swarm of boats. She eventually sank near Malta. Fortunately she had already reached Marseilles with the first batch of Australians, and it was while returning empty that she was torpedoed. Some of the succeeding ships, by way of precaution, were diverted to Toulon, but were immediately sent on thence to Marseilles.

The British authorities in France were beset by two anxieties concerning the arrival of the troops now coming from Egypt. The medical staff was highly apprehensive lest diseases, so far prevented from entering the Western zone, might now slip in; and the Lines of Communication staff at Marseilles, rendered nervous by rumours of Australian indiscipline, were fearful of riotous outbreaks in Marseilles while these troops were passing through. The authorities

intended to reduce the chance of such trouble by arranging that the transit from the docks to the trains should be as rapid and unostentatious as possible.

In the force now about to reach France precautions had been taken against both contingencies. Prevention of disease had been carefully enforced. Australian soldiers were, unlike the British, compulsorily vaccinated, and a double inoculation with "T.A.B." vaccine had been carried out before they left Egypt.<sup>1</sup> Further, at Serapeum and Moascar, as a precaution chiefly against the dreaded typhus, clothing had been put through disinfectors, the most effective of which was "Hunter's Train"—a string of trucks filled with steam from a locomotive. Finally, under the orders of G.H.Q., an inspection for venereal disease had been held during the voyage. In the matter of discipline, the majority of Australian troops, though not given to open profession of high-minded sentiments, recognised as deeply as most men their responsibilities, and Birdwood's message and addresses had also sunk in. Their feelings at this time were well interpreted by a young fighting clergyman who, in the absence of a chaplain, conducted a service on the *Transylvania*. Looking down upon at least a thousand men who crowded the well deck, he said—

We know what we have come for, and we know that it is right. We have all read of the things that happened in France. We know that the Germans invaded a peaceful country and brought these horrors into it. . . . We came of our own free wills—to say that this sort of thing shall not happen in the world as long as we are in it. . . . And what if we die? If it were not for the dear ones whom he leaves behind, might not a man pray for a death like that? . . . We know we are not heroes, and we do not want to be called heroes. . . . Did not every one of us, as boys, long to go about the world as they did in the days of Raleigh or Drake, and didn't it seem almost beyond hope? Here we are on that great enterprise, and with no thought of gain or conquest, but to help to right a great wrong. . . . With our dear ones behind, and God above, and our friends on each side, and only the enemy in front—what more do we wish than that?

<sup>1</sup> In a few cases the second inoculation was given during the voyage. The vaccine now given was "T.A.B."—a preventive not only of typhoid but of paratyphoid "A" and "B," which, before this vaccine was introduced, had been rampant at Anzac. All members of the A.I.F. oversea were, after the Evacuation, inoculated with T.A.B., and an undertaking was given by the medical authorities in Australia that all reinforcements should thenceforward be inoculated with that vaccine before leaving for the front. This undertaking was, for some reason, not carried out. Much trouble was afterwards caused by the discovery in France that Australian troops entering that country had been inoculated against typhoid only. The mistake was very serious, and might have led to grievous results.



In the lives of most of these troops the days of their first entry into France, and of the long train-journey northwards from Marseilles, formed an unforgettable episode. On the afternoon of March 19th the first transport, carrying Brigadier-General Paton, the Headquarters of the 7th Brigade, and the 25th Battalion, moved in past the Ile d'If to the crowded harbour of Marseilles. The regimental bands of the brigade, recently resuscitated after the Evacuation, had been practising the "Marseillaise," and they struck up as the transports moved in. The men whistled it; some tried their tags of French; others cheered and shouted, and broke off to stare with fascination, almost as if at some new animal, at the German prisoners working on the railway trucks and guarded by French territorials in kepis and red trousers. The French crews and people about the quays cheered back, but there was little opportunity of seeing the town or its people. Word had not yet come to the local staff from G.H.Q., far in the north, as to the destination of the Australians, and Paton and his troops were therefore kept on board for the night. In the morning they disembarked and marched to a camp in the pleasant grounds of Château Santi, overlooking the harbour of Marseilles, where, on the following morning, this advance force was inspected by the French General Cocquet, commanding the XV Region. In the meantime, the Marseilles staff had received the following:

Delia is allotted to Steele of Faith. Concentration area will be about Berwick. Detraining stations Thirsk, Berwick, and Leeds. Entrainment for concentration area can now be carried out as units arrive. Previous instructions *re* destinations of artillery, Lines of Communication units, advance party, and 1st Line Transport hold good. See my ZQ752/24. Acknowledge.

From Communications.

The translation of the first portion of this telegram was—

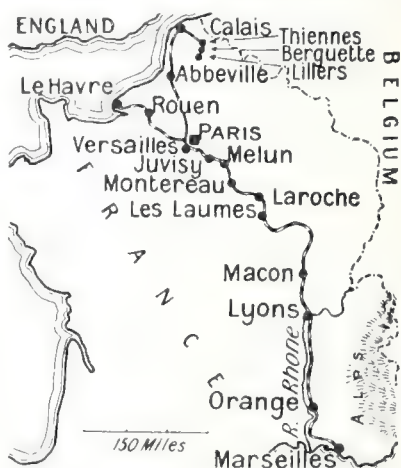
The 2nd Australian Division is allotted to the XI Corps of the First Army; detraining stations, Thienne, Berguette, and Lillers (three villages or small towns on the southern edge of French Flanders).

In accordance with the latter part of the message, representatives of the divisional staff and the staff-captains of the brigades entrained at once, or as soon as they arrived, for

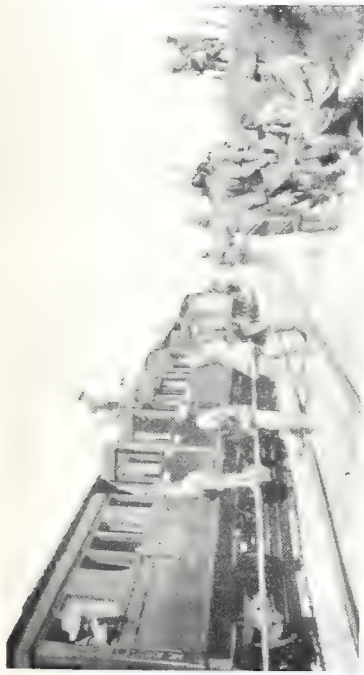
these villages in the north of France. The artillery, then beginning to disembark with its horses and harness, was entrained for Le Havre on the English Channel, where guns and vehicles were to be drawn from one of the great dépôts of the British army. The first-line (that is to say, regimental) transport was similarly entrained to draw vehicles from another great dépôt at Abbeville. The bakeries, butcheries, and dépôt units of supply, as they landed, were directed chiefly to Rouen, one of the main British dépôts. The infantry were

entrained for the villages named in the telegram. As fresh shiploads arrived in port, the troops were in most cases disembarked on to the quay, where they waited for two or three hours, each unit placing a guard at the dock gates to prevent men from leaving the docks and straggling about the town. Waggon's would presently arrive for their baggage, which would at once be loaded and sent off under guard. The unit would then march to

the entraining station. Most of the trains left at night, and the artillerymen, each of whom walked with two horses through the cobbled streets, had some difficulty in getting their unaccustomed animals past the trams. One or two battalions, which happened to march through by day, had a fine reception from the inhabitants, but the passage of the greater part of the force was almost unnoticed. A few men broke bounds, and made their way into the city, but the proportion was trifling. A week or more later, when the movement of the first two divisions had been practically completed, General Birdwood's staff was informed by the British authorities at Marseilles that no troops had ever given them less trouble. Some months later still, when the II Anzac Corps came to France, and its two divisions passed



*Railway route taken by Anzac divisions through France*



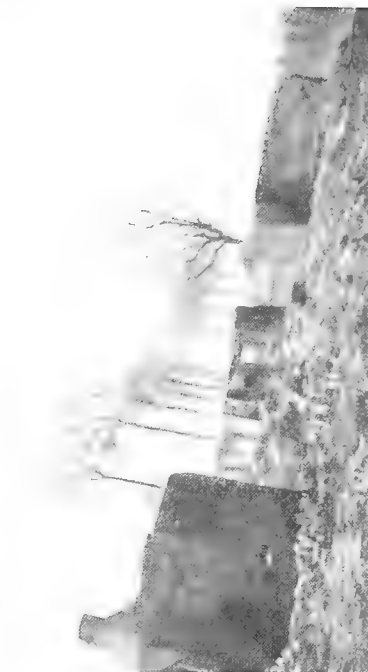
5. Troop train of 2nd Australian Division halted in the Rhone Valley.



6. A typical billet.



7. 5th Brigade Headquarters, La Rolanderie, behind the line at Bois Grenier.



8. Billet of 17th Battalion near La Rolanderie after being shelled by the Germans (*see p. 139*).

EARLY DAYS OF THE A.I.F. IN FRANCE

*Taken by Sapper A. H. Edmunds, 2nd Div. Signal Coy.*

*Face p. 72.*



9. "MONSIEUR ET MADAME"

This old farmer and his wife lived in a farm within 800 yards of the front line at Bois Grenier (*see plate No. 14*).

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. EZ31.*

*To face p. 73.*



through Marseilles, the commandant of the British base at that seaport, Colonel Tinley,<sup>2</sup> wrote to General M'Cay, after the passage of the last troops:—

It gives me very great pleasure to be able to tell you that the conduct of your division (the 5th) during the passage through this place has been exemplary. Notwithstanding the many and varied attractions and temptations of this huge seaport, I am glad to say that not a single case of misbehaviour or lack of discipline has been brought to my notice. It is a record, and one the division may be proud of. . . . The best of good luck to you and your fine division.<sup>3</sup>

The troops were now in the gigantic hand of G.H.Q., which controlled their movement and all incidental arrangements. The units had been warned that they would be undertaking a railway journey of fifty-eight hours; the precise destinations were supposed to be known only to the regimental commanders and railway transport officers.<sup>4</sup> Each train carried rations for that time. The infantry were entrained chiefly in passenger coaches, third-class carriages for the men (eight to a compartment), and first-class for the officers. The artillery horses were in covered waggons, each for eight horses.<sup>5</sup> The train—travelling slowly, but, except for certain halts, continuously—took each unit from the entraining platform at Marseilles to its destination in northern France.

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<sup>2</sup> Col. G. F. N. Tinley, C.B., C.M.G. Officer of Indian Regular Army; of Lower Bourne, Farnham, Surrey, Eng.; b. 4 Nov., 1857. Died 18 Feb., 1918.

<sup>3</sup> The fine record of the Australian troops at Marseilles appears to have been broken only by one serious incident, which occurred during the passage through Marseilles of the reinforcements for the 4th and 5th Divisions, 3,600 strong, comprising a majority of newly-enlisted men, but including a proportion of the bad characters rejected by all the divisions to whom reference has already been made. These men broke from their two ships at the quayside, passed the sentries on the gangways, and endeavoured to enter Marseilles. Several hundreds from one ship streamed into the town, and were partly "rounded up" the same night by an armed party from the nearest Australian camp. In the other case, one of the landing officers, Lieut. "Harry" Murray of the 13th Battalion (*See Vol. I, 1st edn., pp. 499-500*), happening to be at the dock gates, called on the men to stop, and, when they refused, drew his revolver and faced the oncoming crowd with such obvious determination that it withdrew to the ship.

<sup>4</sup> It was important to prevent news of troop movements from reaching spies in the towns, since the enemy could base on this information his estimate of his opponent's policy.

<sup>5</sup> The horses were placed in two rows facing each other, with their forage and saddles and harness stacked in the space between the rows. Two men travelled in each waggon, with strict injunctions not to smoke.

The journey of almost all units through southern France was made in gloriously fine weather. Its course lay for a day beside the River Rhone, whence the troops looking eastward could see the horizon bordered by mountains gradually rising towards the Alps—which were visible—and the nearer lowlands scattered over with red-roofed farms surrounded by orchards then in full blossom, and with fields and copses all bursting into the fresh delicate green of the European spring. To Australians, accustomed to the more sombre evergreens of the bush, and coming straight from three months in the desert, this country was a fairyland—something guessed at from the picture books of childhood, but beautiful beyond dreams. Here also most of them came for the first time into contact with the warm-hearted people of France. The news of their coming spread quickly, and women, boys, and old men—now almost the only workers in the fields—waved to them as they passed. Three times each day the trains stopped for an hour at certain stations—Orange, Lyons, Macon, Les Laumes, Laroche, Montereau, Juvisy, Melun—where tea or coffee was supplied to the troops by the French authorities or, in some cases, by French ladies who had organised a service for their own men coming on leave. At these and other halts on the way the Australians received special and overwhelming kindness from the inhabitants. Men and women pressed upon them presents of fruit and wine. Not one in fifty of the troops could speak French passably, but the vigorous buoyant youth on both sides required few, if any, words to find natural expression. For some reason the French—not only the people, but even some of the military leaders—before they knew anything of the Australians except by sight or from press reports, and certainly long before the troops had given in France any proof of their quality, accepted them as among the finest fighters in the war. From these first days in France it was obvious that the Australian soldier, in whom natural friendliness was untrammelled by any consciousness of social distinctions, was much nearer to the mass of the French people than the shyer and less expansive men of the British Army. Their intense delight in this first train journey is reflected in almost every diary and home letter

of that period. For example a boy, killed afterwards in France,<sup>6</sup> wrote to his mother:

Dear Mum,

My lot did not go to England, for which I am rather glad, as it enabled me to see such a great lot of France, which I think easily beats all others claiming to be God's Own Country. I never dreamt of such scenery, and the people are fine. Nearly every household has lost a member, or relation, but still the spirit they keep up is marvellous. . . .

Another<sup>7</sup> wrote:

I had no idea that such a country existed. After all, one cannot wonder why the French people are fighting with all their might and main in defence of their homelands, for really they have something to fight for and no mistake. The reception we got was just grand, for at every place they greeted us finely, showering flowers upon us and other things besides. . . .

After an appreciative reference to his treatment by the "lovely girls" of France, he adds:

But one sees on all sides the gloomy side of things, for nearly everyone has lost someone in this war, and it is very sad to see such mourning, and a surprising number of widows too. . . . There is no mistake our boys are wonderfully popular, and what a pity we have a few rotters who give fair Australia a bad name. . . .

The writer of the 7th Battalion diary says:

Thirty-five men to one truck does not give much room to sleep in. However, nature made us forget all about our grumbling by the glorious scenery that was unveiled before us when we woke this morning. The inhabitants kept our chaps busy too, right through the whole of the journey, giving them souvenirs and by cheering them on. Our chaps returned both with interest. . . .

The journey was free from indiscipline, except in the case of a few men whom the inhabitants had treated over-liberally. Every train-load experienced a disappointment when—generally on the second evening—just short of Paris, each troop-train turned off, and, passing through Versailles and round south and west of the great city, of which the Eiffel tower was just visible against the sky, headed away from the capital and towards Calais. The weather was now much colder, and the sky grey, with rain often falling; on

<sup>6</sup> Pte. R. D. Bussell (No. 3012; 56th Bn.). Clerk; of Aberdeen and Gunnedah, N.S.W.; b. Quirindi, N.S.W., 27 Feb., 1893. Died of wounds, 25 July, 1916.

<sup>7</sup> S/Sgt. J. C. Tolmie (No. 1426; 53rd Bn.). Station overseer; b. Albany, W. Aust., 1890.

March 24th heavy snow fell.<sup>8</sup> The country was still beautiful, but wet and less inviting. As the trains neared the front their running became slower, being more impeded by that of other trains serving the urgent and changing needs of the front. A few miles short of Calais those carrying the infantry turned again, almost eastwards, and headed for the places of detrainment. In this back area of the British front were seen the first obvious signs of the vast business of the lines of communication; the most striking, never observed before by Australian soldiers, was the seemingly endless columns of motor-lorries seen from time to time on the roads.

The advance staff of the 2nd Division, including its chief medical staff-officer, reached Aire, Headquarters of the First British Army, on March 22nd. On the following afternoon the brigade transport arrived, sent thither by mistake instead of to Abbeville. Three hours after nightfall the infantry began to reach Thiennes. There were insufficient guides at the railway, but Lieutenant-Colonel Walker<sup>9</sup> of the 25th Battalion, in charge of the first troops, was directed to the "rest camp," at the village of Morbecque, two miles short of the country town of Hazebrouck. Leading his battalion, with the 7th Field Company and 7th Field Ambulance following behind, Walker found his way to the place, a camp of tents kept standing to accommodate troops who were resting or at the end of a stage of their march. In this the men settled about 2 a.m. An hour later it began to snow. The men then possessed only one blanket each, and but a week before had

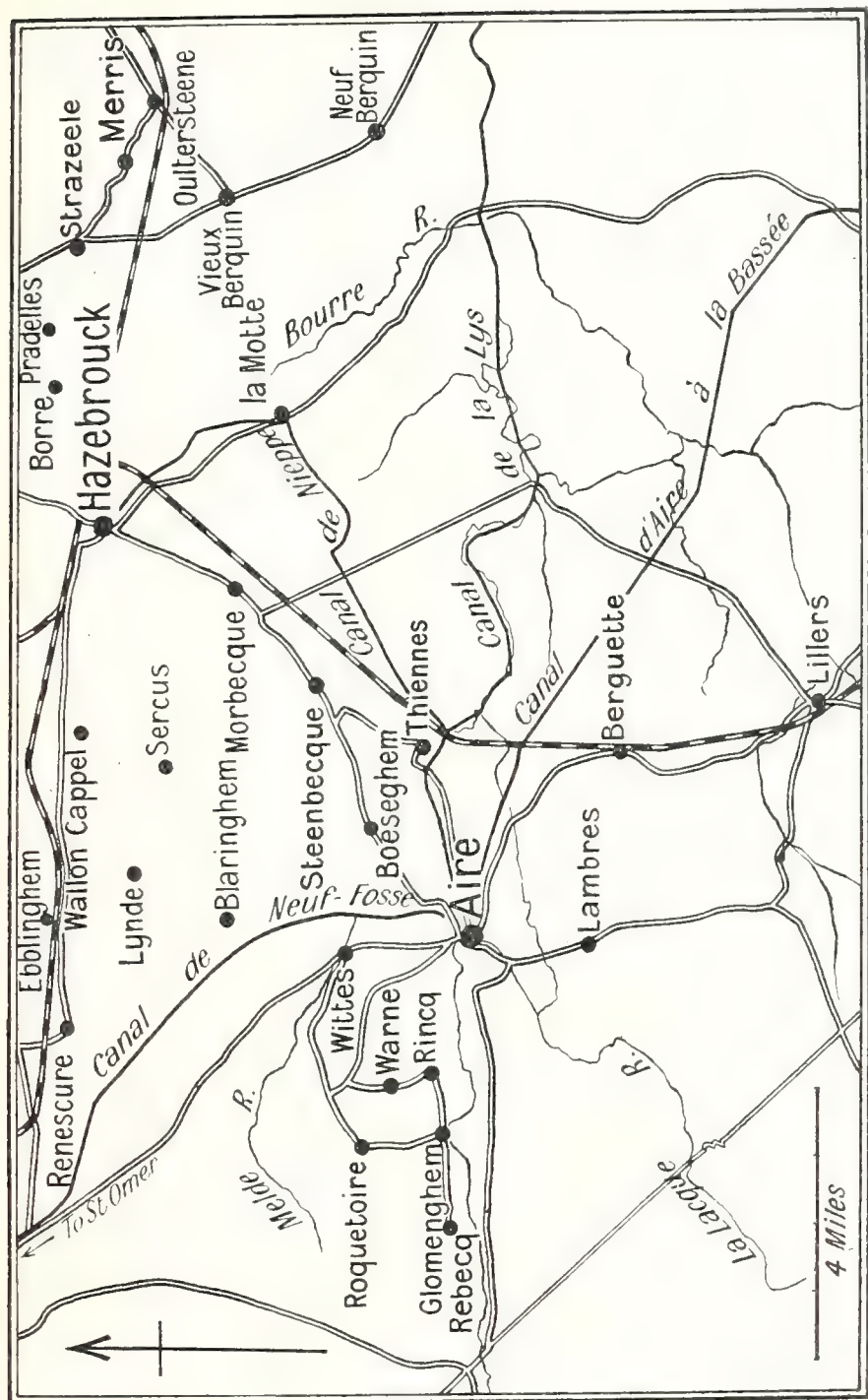


*Railway route of Anzac divisions through Northern France*

<sup>8</sup> It is recorded that some of the 6th Field Company, at a halt on the way, enjoyed the first snow-fight of their lives.

<sup>9</sup> Lieut.-Col. J. Walker, D.S.O. Commanded 25th Bn., 1916. Master builder; of Brisbane; b. Laurencetown, Co. Down, Ireland, 16 Aug., 1863.





THE CONCENTRATION AREA OF THE I ANZAC CORPS IN FLANDERS, APRIL 1916

been under the blazing sun of Egypt; but though some sickness followed, they came through the experience well. The brigade headquarters had already settled into a school near the *mairie*, and next day, thanks to its efforts and the assistance of the French interpreters, who had been attached to the units, the rest of the troops were housed in billets. The 25th were assigned to various farm-houses round the village, the 26th (with its headquarters at Codron's Farm) to others, the 7th Field Company and 7th Field Ambulance partly to the village houses and partly to a large farm near the *château*. The 27th and 28th, on arriving that night, moved into the standing camp.

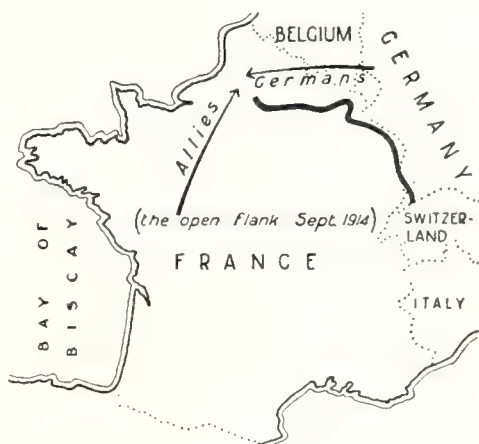
Thus the whole of the 7th Brigade was concentrated about this village. Most of the staff of the 2nd Division reached Flanders next day, and was billeted at Lambres. Following them, the 5th Brigade concentrated about Thiennes, and the 6th at the villages of Roquetoire, Rincq, Warne, Glomenghem, Wittes, and Rebecq. Practically the whole of the 2nd Division was thus concentrated, mainly round Aire. By that time the 1st Division, which had been allotted to the Second Army, was likewise detraining near Hazebronnck, a little to the north of the 2nd, its headquarters being in the village of Merris and its units in Strazeele, Steenbecque, Wallon-Cappel, Château la Garenne, and other villages, in an area which, by a strange turn of fortune, was to be the scene of some of this division's last and most brilliant fighting. About this time<sup>10</sup> the British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, inspected part of the 7th Brigade, which was drawn up for the purpose beside the Morbecque-Hazebronnck road; and on the 29th Lord Kitchener, happening to be then in France, similarly reviewed near Aire parts of the 5th and 6th Brigades and of the 2nd Divisional Artillery. His address was: "Well boys, I am glad to welcome you in France. If you uphold your reputation gained on Gallipoli you will be liked by everyone but the Germans."<sup>11</sup>

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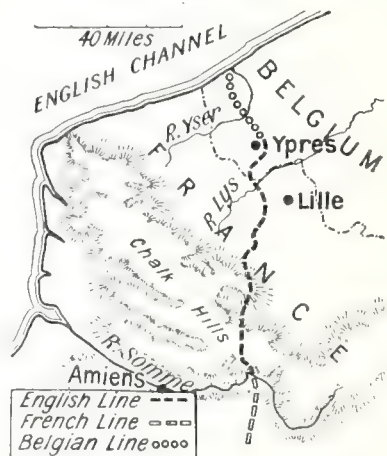
<sup>10</sup> On March 27.

<sup>11</sup> Extract from diary of Bdr. H. C. Ferguson, 22nd A.F.A. Bde. (of Duverney, Vic.), who was killed at Ginchy on 22 Dec., 1916.

At the time when the I Anzac Corps with its three divisions arrived in France, the British army on the Western Front consisted of 41 British and 3 Canadian infantry divisions, together with 3 British and 2 Indian cavalry divisions. These were holding a front of some eighty miles; the French to the south of them, with some 111 divisions, were holding 370 miles, their line ending at the Swiss border. To the north of the British the Belgians and a French army corps, wedged between the British army and the sea, held twenty miles. The Allied front was thus held with 160 divisions, the Germans opposing them with about 120. As early as October, 1914, the trench-line across France had been continuous from the Swiss border to the North Sea, and the offensives undertaken by both sides since that time had effected no more than to cause here or there a slight local bulge, or a hardly perceptible dint. In the sector held by the British, the front remained almost exactly as it had crystallised since the attempt made by each side to outflank the other after the Battle of the Aisne in September, 1914. This race to outflank had led to the transfer of the British Army to the north-west corner of France, where, in the First Battle of Ypres, on the edge of the Flemish lowlands, the attempt of the Germans to reach the Channel ports had been finally fought out. The portion of France occupied by the British Army was thus no more than a small rectangle of from forty to forty-five miles from east to west, and of seventy-five from north to south. Across it, diagonally from south-east to north-west, ran the rolling chalky hills which form a low upland north of the Somme. South of this diagonal lay undulating "downs" country, with scattered villages and woods. East and north



of it there stretched away into Belgium the lowlands of the Rivers Lys and Yser, mile upon mile of intense cultivation or rich meadow, with its tiny fields surrounded by watery ditches and often by hedges. Half-way down the front, at about the junction of the plain and the hills, lay a fairly extensive coalfield. Here and also on the agricultural lowlands to the north—where the people were a blend of Flemish and French—the population was densely grouped in straggling villages and thickly sprinkled farms. To the south, on the downs near the Somme, the population was less dense and the country more open.



(A French corps was on the Belgian left.)

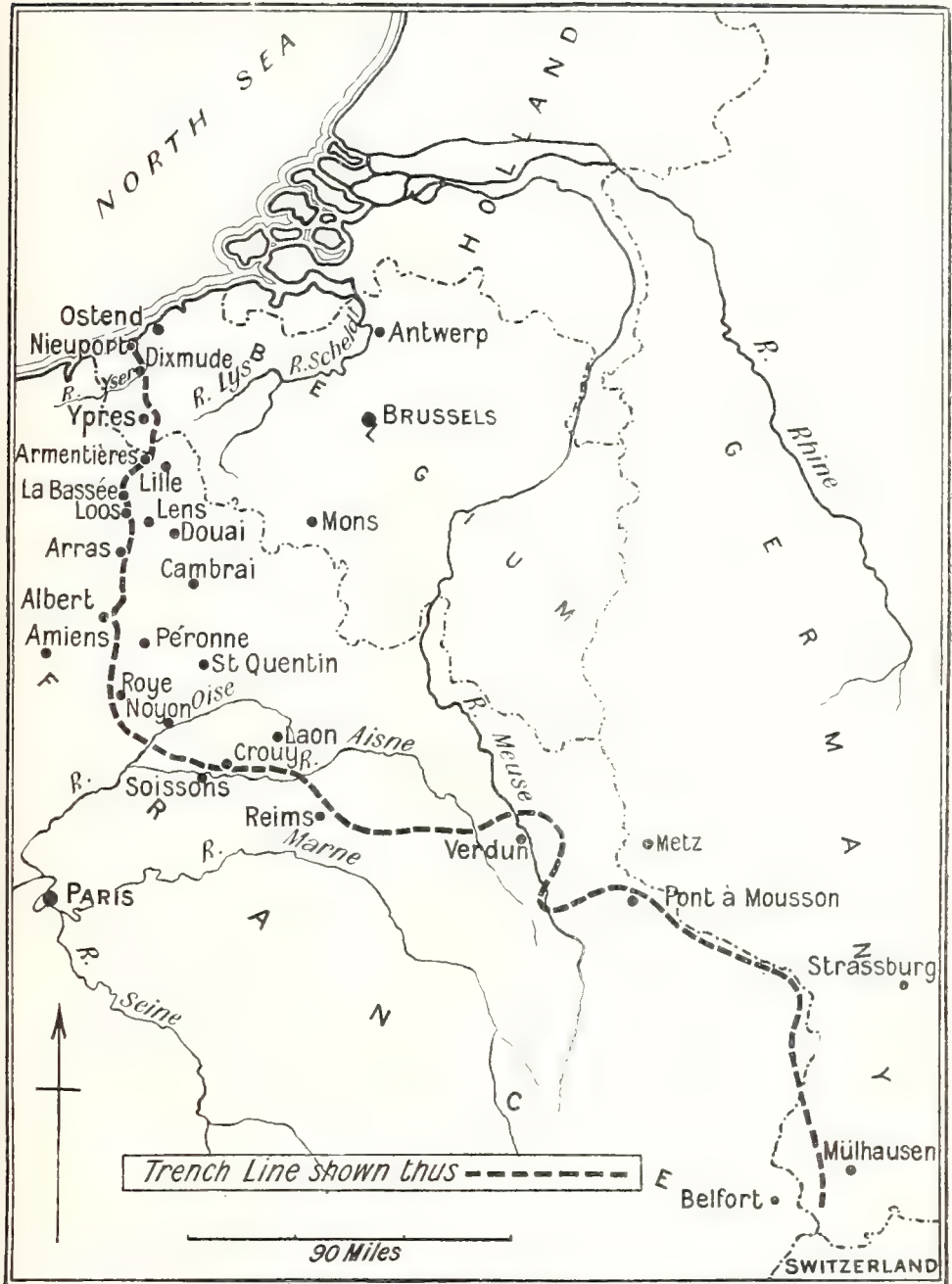
Such was the area occupied by the British Expeditionary Force. On its north and west sides lay the sea; on the south extended the avenue to the intact portion of France; to the east ran the trench-line. As the British Expeditionary Force had grown from the twelve divisions<sup>12</sup> which held the line at the time of the First Battle of Ypres to its present strength of forty-nine divisions,<sup>13</sup> it had taken over parts of the front originally held by the French, and had been subdivided into armies, of which there now existed four. The sectors held by these from the north southwards were as follows.

The extreme northern end of the Allied line, where it bent round Ypres and ran twenty miles along the Yser River to the sea, was held by the Belgian Army and a detached portion of

<sup>12</sup> Eight British infantry divisions; one (nominally two) Indian infantry divisions; and three British cavalry divisions.

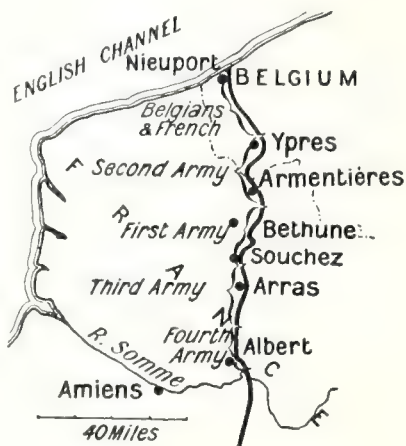
<sup>13</sup> Including five cavalry divisions. At the beginning of 1916 there had been in France and Belgium some 38 British infantry divisions. In the following six months 18 additional divisions arrived—9 from Great Britain and 9 from Egypt—and one (26th, for Salonica) left, bringing the total by July 3 to 55 infantry and 5 cavalry divisions. Of these 47 infantry and 3 cavalry divisions were British; 8 infantry divisions were Dominion troops; 2 cavalry divisions were Indian. South Africa provided a brigade of one British division, and Newfoundland a battalion.





THE WESTERN FRONT, APRIL 1916

the French. At Ypres began the sector of the Second British Army,<sup>14</sup> and it continued southwards across the lowlands towards the foot of the rolling country on the edge of which begins the coalfield. Some miles from these hills the sector of the Second Army ended, while that of the First began and extended through the mining country past Bethune and Noeux-les-Mines. The next sector, beginning at Souchez and covering the region round the old city of Arras, had lately been occupied by the Tenth French Army, wedged between two British forces. Recently, however, in order to relieve the French during the Battle of Verdun, the Third British Army, which originally<sup>15</sup> had held a sector farther south, north of the Somme, had taken over this frontage, although some of the French artillery still remained in position. At the same time<sup>16</sup> the Fourth British Army had taken over from the Third the southern part of its sector on the undulating chalk downs as far as the north bank of the River Somme, east of Amiens. The strength of the four armies was:—



Second Army (commanded by General Sir Herbert Plumer<sup>17</sup>)—

- 9 British infantry divisions
- 3 Canadian infantry divisions
- 1 cavalry division

<sup>14</sup> Formed early in 1915 under General Sir H. L. Smith-Dorrien. It then comprised three army corps.

<sup>15</sup> Since July, 1915, when it was formed under General Monro.

<sup>16</sup> End of February, 1916.

<sup>17</sup> Field-Marshal Lord Plumer, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., G.B.E., p.s.c. Commanded Second Army, 1915/17 and 1918/19; British Forces in Italy, 1917/18. Officer of British Regular Army; of Bilton, Yorks, Eng.; b. 13 March, 1857.

First Army (General Sir Charles Monro)—

12 British infantry divisions

1 cavalry division

Third Army (General Sir Edmund Allenby<sup>18</sup>)—

9 British infantry divisions

1 Indian cavalry division

Fourth Army (General Sir Henry Rawlinson<sup>19</sup>)—

11 British infantry divisions

1 Indian cavalry division

Thirty-four of the infantry divisions were at that time holding the line; ten were training or "resting." The four cavalry divisions, which were not then used for holding the trench-line, were training in the back areas of their respective armies; a fifth was farther back under G.H.Q. The whole British force in France and Belgium comprised 1,200,000 men. In the Second Army there were, on April 12th, 309,790 men and 85,960 animals; of these 34,003 men and 7,545 animals<sup>20</sup> belonged to the I Anzac Corps, which had now been definitely allotted to the Second Army. As the New Zealanders arrived, the Anzac force rapidly increased to about 55,000.<sup>21</sup>

As has been explained, the British "back area," lying between this trench-line and the sea, was but a small one. Its eastern side, from Ypres to the Somme, had a length of slightly under seventy miles "as the crow flies," and the Channel coast, which lay practically parallel and formed its western boundary, was only forty to fifty miles away. From Ypres to Calais was less than forty miles. Armentières, past the easternmost end of which the line ran, was fifty-five miles from the sea at Boulogne. Hazebrouck, a small but important railway centre in Flanders, seventeen miles from the line, was thirty-three from Calais and forty from Boulogne. St. Omer,

<sup>18</sup> Field-Marshal Lord Allenby, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., p.s.c. G.O.C. in Chief, Egyptian Exped. Force, 1917/19; High Commissioner for Egypt, 1919/25. Officer of British Regular Army; of Felixstowe, Suffolk, Eng.; b. Brackenhurst, Southwell, Notts, Eng., 23 April, 1861.

<sup>19</sup> Field-Marshal Lord Rawlinson, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.V.O., K.C.M.G., p.s.c. Commanded First Army, 1915/16; Fourth Army, 1916/17 and 1918/19; Second Army, 1917/18; Commander-in-Chief, India, 1920/25. Officer of British Regular Army; of Trent, Dorset, Eng.; b. 20 Feb., 1864. Died, 28 March, 1925.

<sup>20</sup> Only the 2nd, and part of the 1st, Division had then arrived.

<sup>21</sup> By July it had further increased to over 100,000, of whom practically all were front-line troops. In these figures the attached British troops are included.

the ancient abbey-town (which at this time G.H.Q. was just quitting for Montreuil farther south), lay between these three, thirteen miles from Hazebrouck. The Third Army's front at Arras was a little over fifty miles from the sea; and Albert, on the River Ancre near its junction with the Somme, where the Fourth Army's line ended and that of the French began, was but the same distance from the Somme mouth.

The villages in which the I Anzac Corps was billeted, around Hazebrouck and Aire, were from fifteen to twenty miles in rear of the line. That trench-line had for a year and a half provided a barrier impassable by man. In peace time the metropolis of French Flanders had been the great wool-manufacturing centre of Lille,<sup>22</sup> to which most of the roads led, and which had been the administrative centre of the Département du Nord. Its name was on many of the sign-posts behind the British lines, but for eighteen months the city itself had been cut off by the intervening line of the front. From some of the higher points in the British area its spires were visible over the low ridge which lay between. One of its small outliers, Armentières—a centre of the linen industry—was within the British lines. But the great city itself now lay in the mysterious unattainable region beyond the front, six miles within the territory occupied by the Germans. Many of the French people in the British area had close relatives who were, or were believed to be, still in the country on the other side of the line, and from whom occasionally came vague tidings—sometimes of a death among the older people, usually attributed to the shock of their changed circumstances.<sup>23</sup>



<sup>22</sup> The great wool-manufacturing district, including Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing, had before the war a population of 1,000,000.

<sup>23</sup> The French inhabitants of the occupied regions were sometimes allowed to correspond, under restrictions, with French prisoners in Germany, who in turn could send strictly censored letters through neutral channels to their relations in France.



From the stations where they first detrained, those of the troops whose senses were alert for such signs could hear the distant "thump-thump" of the guns and, at night, see the flickering white halo of the flares thrown to illuminate No-Man's-Land—sights and sounds which were never to cease until the Armistice which ended the war. In April, 1916, the struggle along the British front was merely one of trench-warfare, intense at Ypres and a few other points such as Loos and Vimy, but normal elsewhere. Although preparing a few minor operations at those places, the enemy was concentrating his whole serious effort at Verdun.

The billeting area was full of interest to Australians, and to none more than to officers and men who had served in Gallipoli. The troops, who since enlistment had never lived among civilians, had been looking forward to living in French farms, their anticipations being coloured partly by romantic tales of the Napoleonic wars, and partly by the distant view which they had obtained of farms and villages in the Rhone valley and by their reception at the stopping-places. They had dreams of again sleeping between sheets and breakfasting with linen tablecloths. When they reached allotted villages and were conducted, fifty men in a batch, through a muddy farmyard containing a vast pit of manure, into an ancient barn with a leaky tiled roof and cracked walls of timber and daubed mud, and were left to sleep there on the ground or in the hay-loft, amid the crowded rat-holes, the shock was a sharp one; but it was invariably softened by the men's sense of humour. The few spare bedrooms—those of sons and fathers serving (or, too often, killed) at the front—were practically all occupied by officers. In the larger villages the *château* or chief country house in the district would probably be used as quarters for the divisional commander or brigadier and part of the staff, the school or part of the *mairie* often serving for offices. In the smaller villages the school house would probably be used as battalion headquarters, and the companies would mostly be quartered in the neighbouring farms. These were of the type usual in Flanders, built round a courtyard of which practically the whole was occupied by the manure pit. The people were hard-working, the women, like the men, being heavily built and coarsely clad, and

therefore very different from the dainty girls who had thrown fruit and flowers to the newcomers during the journey from Marseilles. Nevertheless it was unalloyed delight to be again among white children, and to take part in the life of these simple families. Home-life is nowhere stronger than in Australia; it was a real pleasure to be able to fill the bucket for "*Madame*," or help to put in the horse or fetch the fuel. With their easy manners the Australians—the majority of them "mothers' boys"—dropped naturally into some niche in the family and came to admire the grit in these country people, who, with their men-folk almost all at the war, were nevertheless carrying on, practically without interruption, the immense agriculture of France. The soldiers played with the children, attempted to flirt with the girls—a few tags of bad French and broken English being amply sufficient—and occasionally sipped coffee and rum with "grandpapa" at night over the stove in the living-room. But it was above all to "*Madame*," who sold them beer and eggs at not unreasonable prices, and who often grew to care for them and tend them like a mother, that the Australians' affections went out. Naturally the men of the transport, the artillery, and the more stationary units came to know them best. The infantry were moving, and only occasionally returned to billets which they had occupied before. But even they made firm friends of these homely and kindly people. In some parts of France it was obvious that the first fine glow of hospitality to their Allies had cooled as the time passed, and that the protracted invasion of their homeland by this army of foreigners was not easy to tolerate without impatience. Moreover in some villages intercourse became tinged with commercialism, the comparatively opulent Australians being regarded merely as good customers and treated accordingly. But this was not often the case, especially with the farm folk among whom the Australians first went and whom they were destined to meet again most dramatically in the final year of the war.<sup>24</sup>

The institution of eight days' regular leave to England provided another condition which had been unknown in the

<sup>24</sup> When the 1st Australian Division returned to Strazeele in April, 1918. This episode will be narrated in *Vol. V*.

Dardanelles Campaign. But almost a year was to pass before the Australian troops had worked through the roster of their first leave. The military regulations in France and England enforced more neatness in dress than had been customary in the A.I.F. in Egypt. Officers, except at mess or in their billets, were always distinguishable by their leather "Sam Browne" belts, with cross-strap to support a sword, though no swords were worn except by cavalry when mounted. With the rank and file of the A.I.F. an influence more powerful in the matter of dress than any military regulations was probably the presence of women. Yet, though neater than before, they still conformed to the standards of their own country, in which elaborate punctiliousness in dress is looked upon as unmanly; and they could never be brought to obey the regulation by which every officer, whether they knew him or not, was to be saluted.

Training commenced at the time of arrival; but in their early days in France the troops had little effective military exercise, being forbidden to move across the country, which was mostly cultivated, with crops just shooting. They were, however, marched daily along the roads in order to harden them and accustom them to march discipline, which was much stricter in France than in Egypt. It was some time, for example, before columns of Australians picked up the habit of keeping always to the side, and not the middle, of the road. A miniature rifle-range had been made near Morbecque, where some musketry practice was carried out. Here also a great part of the troops passed, in their gas-helmets, through a trench filled with chlorine gas, it being a wise regulation of G.H.Q. that every soldier entering France must go through this test, and thus acquire confidence in his helmet as a means of safety during a gas attack. It was also ordered that all infantry brigades must witness experiments with "liquid-fire" projectors, which were beginning to be used by the Germans when assaulting trenches. This means of attack, though terrifying by reason of the smoke and roar of the flame, could be combated with tolerable ease by men who had the nerve simply to lie down in the trench and wait for the intruder, with the flame passing over them. Officers and



N.C.O.'s were also picked for sending to the great system of schools—for trench-mortar work, sniping, bombing, gas-warfare, and other training—within the scope of which the Australian divisions now came. For the first time the troops found in each divisional area bathing establishments, at which the men periodically took hot baths, and, leaving their verminous underclothing to be disinfected, received clean vermin-free clothes in exchange.<sup>25</sup> Lectures were given at the billets on the method of preventing frost-bite, on the systems of reliefs, of observing the enemy in and behind his trenches, and upon German espionage in the back areas.

When this period of preparation was just beginning, the medical authorities of the 2nd Division were startled by a message to the effect that a man who had been removed from the transport *Lake Michigan* before she left Alexandria had been found to be suffering from the dreaded typhus. The medical machinery of G.H.Q. was at once set in motion. As the 23rd and 24th Battalions—now at Witte and Rebecq—had come from Egypt in the same ship, those villages were immediately placed out of bounds for all other troops. The two quarantined battalions were sent to the baths, their clothing was sterilised, and their medical officers were instructed to keep a close watch in all cases of fever. As nothing dangerous developed, the ban was shortly afterwards lifted.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile the artillery had proceeded by train to camp at Sanvic—a cold muddy hilltop near Le Havre—where each brigade remained for about a week drawing guns and stores. From March 31st onwards they began to reach their divisions. During the short interval before the divisions were required to enter the line certain provisions were made which had not previously existed in the A.I.F. There were formed for each division “ordnance dépôts,” which indented on the great dépôt

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<sup>25</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 434.

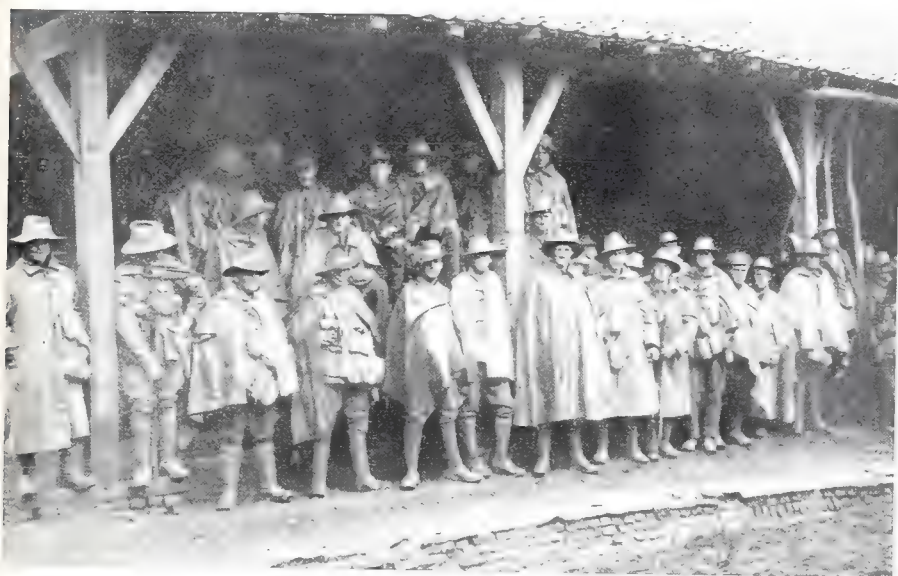
<sup>26</sup> A case of smallpox had also been discovered in the *Knight Templar*, carrying part of the A.S.C., and troops of that ship had been quarantined for a time in camp at Marseilles, as had also part of the 1st Divisional Artillery. Several months later, when the 4th Division was passing through Marseilles, two or three cases diagnosed as typhus occurred in the 49th Battalion at Carcassone. Two officers and 100 men of the 49th and 50th Battalions were at once segregated. The British medical precautions were excellent, as were those of the A.I.F., and no serious disease seems to have slipped into France from the East with the Anzac troops.





10. AUSTRALIANS BUYING CHOCOLATE AT THE ROADSIDE IN FRANCE

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ108.*



11. MEN IN BILLETS NEAR THE "GAS SCHOOL," SAILLY-SUR-LA-LYS

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ37.*

*To face p. 88.*



12. AUSTRALIANS BILLETED IN A FARM SOUTH OF ARMENTIÈRES

The edge of the manure pit occupying the centre of the courtyard can be seen in this and the preceding illustration.

at Calais for such stores as they required—the first indent for the 1st Division's store being:

- 20,000 blankets.
- 8,000 woollen vests.
- 8,000 woollen drawers.
- 5,000 cardigan jackets.
- 40,000 gas-helmets (84 pattern).
- 21,000 anti-gas satchels.
- 20,000 anti-gas goggles.
- 14,000 steel helmets.

All troops were furnished with the new gas-mask, which had necessarily been introduced to meet the inclusion by the Germans of phosgene in their gas.<sup>27</sup> In addition goggles were provided as a protection against lachrymatory shells, which the enemy had now begun to employ for impeding observation

<sup>27</sup> The mask originally supplied to the troops at Anzac had been an impregnated pad to be tied over mouth and nostrils. This was superseded, while the troops were still at Anzac, by a cowl impregnated with hyposulphite of soda. The Germans, however, about the end of 1915 began to mix with their chlorine gas phosgene, against which the hypo. helmets were no protection. The hypo. helmets were accordingly withdrawn and phenate helmets "issued." These were shortly afterwards superseded by the box-respirator, worn on the chest and connected by tube with a mask—far the most efficient method of protection.

Very shortly after the first use of gas by the Germans in April, 1915, the Professors of Physiology, Physics, and Chemistry in the University of Melbourne (Professors W. A. Osborne, T. H. Laby, and D. O. Masson) designed a respirator resembling in some respects that eventually adopted in 1916 for the British Army. The British authorities, on being informed, deprecated any separate action by Australia to provide masks, since further experiments were then in progress. As, however, the apparatus appeared more efficient than the masks then in use, the Minister for Defence ordered 10,000 to be made and forwarded to the Australian troops in Egypt, a specimen being also sent to the War Office for testing by the British authorities. The respirators, together with the young graduate who was sent over to instruct the troops in the use of them, arrived in Egypt in April, 1916. Godley, however, objected to a small percentage of his troops being trained to use a mask different from that used in France, and passed the young officer on to the High Commissioner in England. Meanwhile the anti-gas experts in London had examined the Melbourne University respirator and decided that, while it embodied points which were considered useful and "has been most thoroughly worked out and is of excellent make and finish," it had certain defects, and "the new apparatus now nearing the final stages of evolution in the R.A.M. College meets most of the . . . difficulties and promises very shortly, and after a few modifications now nearing completion, to meet them all." The young officer, Lieut. A. L. Rossiter (of Caulfield, Vic.), was eventually made Gas Officer of the 4th Australian Division, and the gas respirators were sent from Egypt to England for the sake of the chemicals, rubber, and aluminium contained in them. It is possible that the Melbourne design influenced and assisted towards the adoption of the subsequent British type; but the incident illustrates the unwisdom of separate action under the circumstances in which the Dominions and Great Britain were co-operating. If daily inter-communication had been possible, and had been attempted, the Australian experiments might have had an early and useful result.

A more striking example of the same difficulty is afforded by the endeavour of Australia to furnish bombs. This was undertaken at a time when these missiles were badly needed in Gallipoli. By the time, however, when the bombs were received, they were out of date; and, as it was undesirable to train the troops in the use of an obsolete instrument, they were taken to sea and sunk.



by causing the eyes to water. Each brigade destined for the front line was also given the steel helmets with which the British War Office was now furnishing its soldiers as a protection to the head against shrapnel and shell-splinters; it was some months before these could be "issued" to all troops, and when a relief took place the men leaving the front line had at first to pass them on to incoming units.<sup>28</sup>

Further, a regular system of trench-mortar batteries was established, as had recently been done throughout the British Army, there being attached to each division one battery of four heavy 240-millimetre mortars,<sup>29</sup> firing the huge 152-lb. bombs; three of medium trench-mortars, firing spherical 60-lb. bombs with short iron handles,<sup>30</sup> and twenty-four light trench-mortars. The British Army had recently adopted a newly-invented light trench-mortar of extraordinary simplicity and rapidity of fire, known as the "Stokes" gun. This was for use with the infantry, and each infantry brigade was therefore given two four-gun batteries, for which the men had been raised from the infantry battalions while still in Egypt. Demonstrations of these guns had been given in Egypt, but the Australian batteries had not yet received theirs. Men for the medium and heavy trench-mortar batteries were obtained by calling for volunteers from the artillery, of which service these batteries remained a branch.

Another small service, but one destined at certain critical moments to be of inestimable value, was at the same time added to the A.I.F.—that of carrier pigeons: and a pigeon station was organised among the signallers of each infantry brigade. There was also formed in each division a small salvage company, intended to co-operate with the infantry brigades in rescuing and collecting tools, stores, equipment, and other material left behind—especially during a fighting advance—by their troops, and thus endeavouring to reduce the horrifying waste which always accompanies war.

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<sup>28</sup> For those who were provided with helmets it was compulsory to wear them in the forward areas, and anyone who was wounded through not doing so was liable, if incapacitated, to lose his pension.

<sup>29</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 217. On the Armentières front heavy trench-mortars appear to have been first used by the British about Dec., 1915, and by the Germans somewhat later.

<sup>30</sup> Commonly known as "plum-pudding" bombs. Some of these, without their handles, are shown in *Vol. XII*, plate 559.



During these months an important reorganisation of field artillery was proceeding throughout the British Army, it being found requisite that howitzers should be distributed along the front and not concentrated in special brigades. The howitzer brigades were accordingly split up, one battery being incorporated in place of an 18-pounder battery in each of the existing 18-pounder brigades; in each of the Anzac divisions the three displaced 18-pounder batteries were transferred to the brigade commander and staff of the former howitzer brigade, which retained its old title-number.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, in order to economise men for the artillery, the system of maintaining a separate ammunition column for each artillery brigade was now abolished throughout the British Army, divisional ammunition columns being substituted, securing a saving of 10 officers, 255 men of other ranks, 310 horses, and 44 waggons for each division. At the same time the main controlling staff, whether in advance or retreat, being now that of the army corps rather than of the division, the divisional mounted troops—which were maintained against the event of a break-through into open country, or of a retreat—were transferred to the several army corps. To this end the divisional cavalry squadrons and cyclist companies were at this stage respectively combined into corps cavalry regiments and cyclist battalions, those for the I Anzac Corps being known as “1st Anzac Mounted Regiment” and “1st Anzac Cyclist Battalion.”<sup>32</sup> During most of the campaign which followed, these troops were used largely for police duties and traffic control.

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<sup>31</sup> It followed that the ex-howitzer brigades of the A.I.F.—the 21st, 22nd, 24th, and 25th—had no howitzer battery attached. Towards the end of 1916, however, howitzer batteries were formed for them at the A.I.F. artillery dépôt.

<sup>32</sup> The 1st Anzac Mounted Regiment comprised at this time one squadron each of the 4th and 13th Light Horse Regiments and of the Otago Mounted Rifles. To this regiment and the cyclist battalion there had to be added (in order to complete the I Anzac mounted troops) a British motor machine-gun battery.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MOVE TO THE FRONT

SOME of these changes had barely been completed, and others not yet initiated, when the I Anzac Corps was informed that the 2nd Division would be required on April 8th to begin taking over the line south-east of Armentières, then held by the 34th Division. On March 31st the brigadiers of the 2nd Division were warned that they, with the battalion commanders, would be taken next day in 'buses to the forward area. They were to go round the front to be occupied by their troops, while the battalion transport officers would be taken to the headquarters of the 34th Division, about four miles behind the line, to see the methods of drawing rations and ammunition and of supplying them to the troops.



On the same day detachments from the division's artillery, leaving their guns in the back area, began to go forward to the gun positions behind this part of the line, in order to be attached for a few days to the British batteries whose places and guns they were to take over.<sup>1</sup> Five days later each of the infantry battalions destined for the front line was to send forward most of its specialists—three from each Lewis gun team, the grenade officer, the machine-gun officer, four company officers, and a proportion of the signallers—in order that they might settle into the line and take over the normal trench-stores before their battalion moved in.

<sup>1</sup> The British batteries, upon coming out of the line, took over the guns previously belonging to the Australians. Some Australian detachments were in the first place attached for experience to British batteries at Ploegsteert, farther north than the sector to be taken over.

The British line had, since October, 1914, lain close beyond Armentières; but, from the First Battle of Ypres onwards, heavy fighting on this front had been confined to the Ypres Salient, the line southwards becoming quieter in proportion as it approached the outskirts of Lille. One reason for this was the desire of the British to refrain as far as possible from damaging that great French city, or bringing harm to its civil inhabitants. Moreover the nature of the country, intersected with ditches and hedges, was unfavourable for active operations. The line had consequently become very quiet, the Germans, by a sort of tacit agreement, seldom shelling the main part of Armentières—although it lay within a mile and a half of the trenches—so long as the British spared the city and environs of Lille. Each side took advantage of this quietude—the British by employing that sector as a “nursery” for some of its untried troops before sending them to more active sectors. It is true that the staff of the III Corps had been responsible for this sector since the line was first established, but the trenches had been held by a succession of divisions newly sent from England, the latest being the 34th—a fine “New Army” formation largely composed of Tyneside troops<sup>2</sup>—which held the Armentières front, and, farther south, the 35th Division, raised from men of less than the normal height and consequently nicknamed “The Bantams.”

The three divisions of the I Anzac Corps were, however, not regarded in France as untried, although Murray, writing on March 9th, had reminded the War Office that part of the artillery was quite raw and that the general training of the divisions had been interrupted by the tasks of reorganisation and re-equipment. This letter possibly affected the decision of G.H.Q. as to where the Anzac divisions should be employed on arrival in France. At that time the concentration for the great intended Allied offensive had actually begun, although few except the higher staffs were aware of the fact; one division after another was being moved to the southern portion of the British line. The I Anzac Corps—although probably

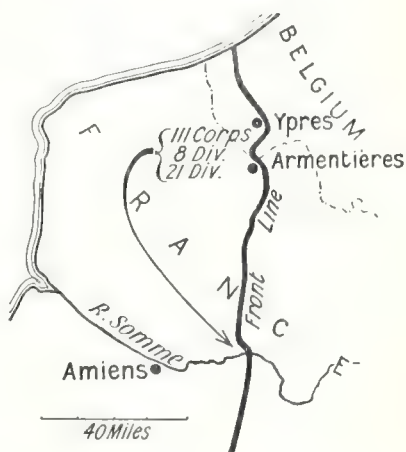
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<sup>2</sup> It included the 102nd (Tyneside Scottish) and 103rd (Tyneside Irish) Brigades, and the 101st (15th and 16th Royal Scots, 10th Lincolnshire, and 11th Suffolk).

not even Birdwood on arrival knew this—had originally been allotted for that offensive, and was to have gone straight from Marseilles to Amiens, where the army of attack was being assembled. It was only on March 18th, the day before the 7th Brigade arrived in France, that this plan had been changed, the reason for its alteration being the receipt of information that part of the Anzac artillery had still to be equipped. The transport from Egypt was taking longer than had been anticipated, and the delay had rendered it improbable that the Anzac divisions could arrive and be equipped with their guns and howitzers in time to participate in the great attack, which—it was then thought—might have to be launched on May 1st. G.H.Q. had consequently decided to send the I Anzac Corps to Armentières, and instead to bring down from that region the III Corps.

When the Australians reached Armentières the III Corps staff and two of its divisions, the 8th and 21st, had already been sent down to the Fourth Army, and the 34th Division was now to follow them. The neighbouring divisions had temporarily extended their flanks to occupy the line previously held by the troops who had been sent to the south, and the old III Corps front was for the time being controlled by the adjoining II Corps.<sup>3</sup>

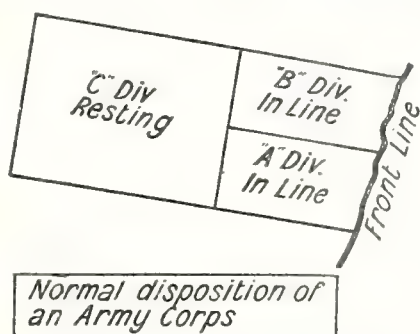
It now became necessary for Australian officers to acquaint themselves with the British method of holding the Western Front, which was far different from that to which they were accustomed in Gallipoli. As in Gallipoli, the location of the several army corps and of the armies was not subject to much change, but British divisions passed from one corps to another far more frequently than at the Dardanelles. It was nevertheless



<sup>3</sup> Most of the III Corps front had at one time been controlled by the First Army.

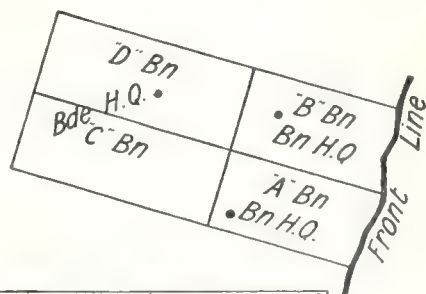


recognised as an advantage to have a corps staff controlling divisions with which it was acquainted, and in the case of the Anzac Corps the known wish of the Australian Government prevented G.H.Q. from separating the Australian divisions from it, except on occasions of extreme urgency. At this time most British corps were composed of three divisions, of which one was resting and training while the other two were in the line. Similarly each of the front-line divisions had two brigades in the line and one in reserve ("resting"). In the German Army, in which regiments consisted of three battalions, the system was often carried a step further, two battalions holding the front trenches, with the third in support. In the British four-battalion



brigades, however, two battalions held the trenches, each with a sister battalion in support. Under the defence scheme laid down by the III Corps for the Armentières sector, each front-line battalion had all four companies in the front trench; but each company retained one of its platoons in close support. The supporting platoon formed the reserve of the company commander, upon which he could call if attacked; each front-line battalion commander could similarly call upon a company of the battalion supporting him. In keeping with this general system, the country was parcelled into areas, those of each army being subdivided into corps areas; each corps allotted various parts of its area to its several divisions and to the "corps troops." The areas of each division were similarly divided into three. In the case of the divisions holding the line, each of the two forward brigades occupied about a mile and a half of front line, with from two and a half to three miles of "hinterland," while the reserve brigade occupied the area immediately behind them. The forward brigade-areas were similarly divided between the two front-line battalions and the two in support. Of these, the two forward areas included several lines of trenches and the communication

trenches, on which would be several posts and battalion headquarters, possibly two-thirds of a mile from the front. The two reserve battalions would be billeted farther back, in farmhouses or cottages along the country roads. In the same neighbourhood would be the brigade headquarters, the machine-gun company, some of the divisional pioneers and engineers responsible for work in



*Normal disposition of a Brigade in the line*

that region, and the field artillerymen whose batteries were grouped at that distance from the front. In rear of this again—from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the line—were the billets of the reserve brigade, the field ambulances, the heavy guns, and the divisional headquarters with its various departments and stores and dumps of ordnance and engineer material, food supplies, and ammunition. In about the same area would be the horse- and waggon-lines for the field artillery and the divisional transport—all within range of occasional shelling by heavy guns. Farther back, in most cases beyond the effective range of the German artillery, were the divisional rest-stations for sick officers and men, bombing schools, and billets of the motor supply-column and ammunition sub-park. The resting division and corps headquarters would be farther still in rear. In the sectors near Armentières most of the divisional headquarters were more than four miles, and corps headquarters no less than fifteen, from the lines.

The dispositions had not always allowed such definite times of "rest" and relief as were usual when the Anzac Corps reached France. Both British and German infantry had in the earlier stages of the war to hold the front for very long periods without any real rest, and subject to the necessity for practically continuous labour. Occasional withdrawal beyond normal artillery-range and intercourse with the civilian population had, however, always been possible;

and the improved conditions existing when the Australians first arrived were strikingly different from those of Anzac, where even the headquarters of the army corps had been within half-a-mile of the line, and that of some of the brigades within a hundred yards. In the Armentières district this difference was emphasised by the fact that up to a mile and a half from the front line the country showed—except for the presence of troops and waggons—few traces of war. Even nearer to the line the country people were still in some cases living in their farms; the children went to school, and they and their elders to the churches; the fields had been ploughed and were sprouting into crop. In Armentières itself the streets leading through the quarter of the town farthest from the Germans were thronged with the poorer families who remained there.

The first advance parties of the 5th, 6th, and 7th Brigades, which visited the line at the beginning of April, were carried to the forward area in motor-lorries or old London omnibuses, painted grey, windowless, and dilapidated.<sup>4</sup> The officers and men of the advance parties, almost all of whom had fought at Anzac, came to this new front like boys who go from a small school to a greater, with their eyes wide open, intending to learn all they could, somewhat anxious in facing for the first time the Germans and the new conditions—such as the possibility of gas-attack—but proud of their Anzac record and determined not to betray their inexperience overmuch. After motoring fifteen miles through the normal flat green Flemish countryside, along cobbled roads frequently fringed with red-tiled farms and smaller cottages, these parties reached Croix du Bac, a small village containing the headquarters of the 34th Division. A mile farther on they passed over the River Lys, a brimming stream, wide enough to carry a fairly constant traffic of barges loaded with road metal and other supplies,<sup>5</sup> and on its far side entered the straggling villages of Sailly, Bac St. Maur, and Erquinghem, built along the roads running parallel to the river and near its bank. Here were the headquarters of the 35th Division, and the first signs

<sup>4</sup> One 'bus containing some of the 2nd Divisional Artillery overturned into a canal, several men being drowned.

<sup>5</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 182.

of enemy action—a few ruined cottages near Saily bridge. Here also the advance parties noted that a number of the doors, windows, and cellar gratings which faced towards the east had been blocked up with sandbags. This was a sign that the inhabitants were still living there, since the troops at that distance seldom took such precautions. Some of the small country factories were working, though the dye-works in Erquinghem had been taken over for military baths and laundry.



A mile nearer the front all motor traffic was stopped by order; indeed, east of Erquinghem, even troops on foot were prohibited from marching in large "formed" parties by daylight. But as the roads lay mainly between hedges and were in most parts shaded by tall elm-trees, the forerunners of the Australian units, even the numerous specialists who marched up with the later parties, went forward by day, keeping near to the side of the track. They crossed one or two long transverse roads running north-eastwards towards Armentières and Lille—the general direction of most of the high-roads in this part of the forward area. These were lined with frequent farms or cottages, in the doors of which were seen occasionally men of the British artillery, engineers, pioneers, machine-gun companies, or reserve battalions who lived in them. A mile and a half from Erquinghem and three south-east of Armentières was the half-ruined village of Fleurbaix, shelled regularly by the enemy, but still containing a few of its Flemish inhabitants, as well as a British brigade headquarters and the billets of a reserve battalion. The headquarters of a second brigade of the 34th Division was a mile and a half to the north-eastwards in a farm (La Rolanderie), the third being in a house in the Rue Marle, one of the straggling southern outskirts of Armentières. At this stage—two miles in rear of the front line—the advance parties began to observe behind



the hedges occasional hummocks of earth, usually several together, half-covered with grass. These were the emplacements of some batteries of field-guns, the men of which lived in the farms near by. Presently the tillage ceased, and most of the fields, though deep in rich grass, began to look matted and unkempt with two years' neglect. About Fleur-



baix the British guides had warned the newcomers that the standing order was that the parties must now split themselves into groups of four or five going forward at intervals of a hundred yards; such a number, even if the enemy observed it, would hardly be worth the expenditure of one of his shells, whereas larger bodies might not only draw fire on themselves, but cause the locality to be subsequently shelled as a "likely" target. At this stage the highway began to have an uncanny and deserted appearance. A thin film of grass sprang in the crevices of the road-metal. More than one corner was pointed out as dangerous, being a known target of one of the enemy batteries of fixed rifles.<sup>6</sup>

The houses (wrote one Australian on his first entry to this part of the line) . . . are very much shelled, and the whole place looks very "unhealthy." They were shelling a hedge as we came up. We could see the shell-smoke behind the trees, and hear the swift whine of the shells—77's, or, as they call them here, "whizz-bangs." . . . It is extraordinary to see little children—golden-haired—running about the farm buildings when a farm only one or two fields away is being shelled—but there it is. They have their gas-helmets—and some were carrying them.

After turning into one of the long cross-roads bordered by half-ruined cottages,<sup>7</sup> the advance parties reached the beginning of the communication trenches. These often began as a gap in the road-hedge, from which there led forward a

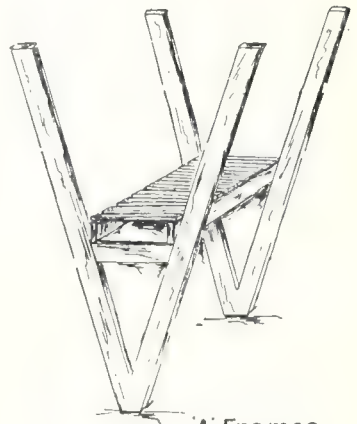
<sup>6</sup> These were at that time occasionally used by both sides. They consisted of half-a-dozen rifles clamped down after being carefully ranged on a track frequented by the enemy.

<sup>7</sup> In one part the cottages were those of the small village of Bois Grenier.

long winding path, at first only slightly sunken, but gradually appearing to sink deeper between two walls of earth and white sandbags, so that, in the course of half-a-mile, the green fields through which it was passing became completely shut out from view. The footway was now of wood-work,<sup>8</sup> boards nailed crosswise on longitudinal beams. The short ladder-like lengths so formed were known as "duckboards," and, laid down in succession, made the floor of most of the passable trenches. In communication trenches they were often set upon a frame shaped like an inverted A, of which the sides helped to support or "revet" the trench-walls, while the short cross-shaft carried the duckboards, allowing water to be drained away beneath.



A Duckboard

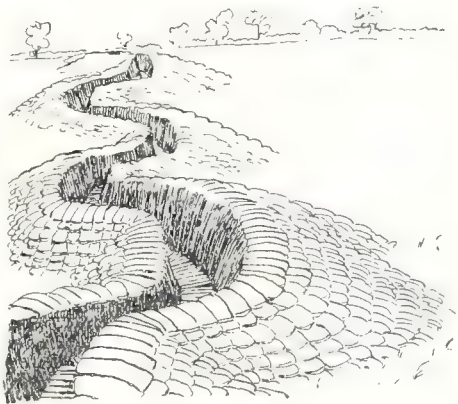


A Frames

Officers and men of the advance parties at this stage observed three marked differences between the conditions here and those of Gallipoli—first, that bare earthen walls like those of the trenches at Anzac would never stand unsupported in country so wet as this; second, that any excavation, however slight, would become waterlogged, and elaborate precautions must be necessary to keep the trenches drained; third, although the fact was not at first so obvious as might be expected, the "trenches" in that sector were in reality not trenches at all, but passages between breastworks. The communication avenues down which the advance parties walked were actually carried on foot-bridges wherever they crossed a ditch. These ditches evidently drained the

<sup>8</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 183.

country, the general surface of which was, as a matter of fact, only one and a half feet above the water-level of the "River" Laies, a large drain which carried away to the Lys the surplus ditch-water. It flowed from the English into the German lines and back; and whenever during the war its course through the British lines became blocked by shell-craters or other obstacles, the water-level in a considerable trench-area rose. Consequently its depth was measured every few hours so as to detect any obstruction, and special measures were taken to keep it clear.



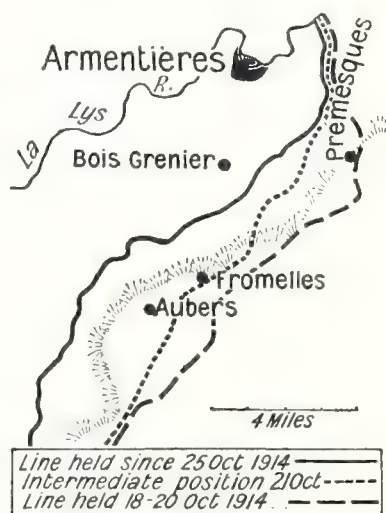
*A communication "trench."*

About ten minutes after entering the several communication trenches (which in this sector were almost invariably known as "avenues") most of the advance parties, after calling at battalion headquarters in some small post leading off the main avenue, came to the "reserve-line" of defences. This was a line of sandbagged shelters and breastworks, usually behind a hedge, running like a low wall across the green country; except for the unkemptness of the grass or self-sown crop, there were still few signs of ravage. About this point, or slightly forward of it, in many of the communication trenches (sometimes in the ruined foundations of an old farmhouse) were small sandbagged redoubts known as "strong-points," placed there in order to bring strong fire upon the enemy from an unexpected direction, if he should succeed in forcing his way through the front line. And, looking forward from the reserve line, the newcomers may have observed that a number of the trees growing about 300 yards in advance of that point had been broken down, the tall stump and shredded end still standing against the sky-line.<sup>9</sup> Those stumps were, in this quiet sector, almost the

<sup>9</sup> See plate No. 15.

only sign of the front line which lay close beneath them. Other unbroken trees, and a low distant ridge beyond, were behind the enemy's lines. Continuing to go forward, the parties came to an old line of sandbagged shelters, originally built for the supports, but afterwards seldom used except as a drain for water from the front line. Seventy yards from this was the front-line breastwork<sup>10</sup>—reaching away to either flank, bay after bay, sector after sector, part of a line of defence which reached from the Swiss border to the North Sea.

This breastwork had not always formed the British front line at Armentières. For a few days after the British Army had first crossed the Lys, on the 16th of October, 1914, the 6th Division had entrenched itself on the low ridge which could now be seen behind the German lines, running from Prêmesques southwards towards Fromelles and Aubers. By heavy fighting during October 20th to 25th it had gradually been forced back from that position, but in the meanwhile a line of rough breastworks had been prepared on the lowlands a mile beyond Bois Grenier. This line, to which the 6th Division had retired by order on the night of October 25th, was the one still held when the Australians entered it. It had since been greatly changed and improved, and now consisted of a rampart of sandbags and earth of from nine to fourteen feet in thickness. In most parts a back wall or parados also had been provided, the effect being to create a sunken passage, which, though it appeared to those who were between its walls to be little different from a trench, was in reality piled above the surface of the surrounding fields.



<sup>10</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 179.



Behind this breastwork, in most parts forming its parados, were rectangular shelters for men and officers, and for the company bomb-stores and headquarters. In each bay of the front line, on the fire-step, stood the sentry watching No-Man's Land through his periscope. Sometimes stuck on the parapet, sometimes on the roof of the shelters behind it, was a toy aeroplane or an arrow on a stick acting as a wind-vane, to show whether the breeze was favourable for a discharge of gas by the enemy. Among the sandbagged shelters in the background were small open spaces, protected by sandbag walls, for the trench-mortars, most of which were kept in rear and only brought up when it was desired to fire them. In the front line a few men specially trained in sniping were ensconced in sniping "pозzies," specially built inside the front breastwork. These were used only by them, the regimental observers and forward observing officers of the artillery keeping watch from other stations, usually some distance behind the lines. At two of the salients—that is to say, sectors in which the line took a forward curve and approached within 100 or 120 yards of the enemy's trench—were shafts some forty feet in depth, from which special tunnelling companies were mining against the enemy. In such neighbourhoods the trench drains were greasy with the slimy water from the miners' pumps, and the sandbags of the breastwork became plastered with the slate-blue clay brought up from the galleries. The detection of this grey hue on the earthworks of either side was a usual method of discovering the position of mines.

The accuracy of German snipers made it dangerous to look over the parapet; but in the mirrors of the periscopes No-Man's Land could be safely watched. It was normally from 250 to 300 yards wide in this part, though ranging from 75 to nearly 500. In the glass of the periscope there showed first the sloping ramp of the breastwork; then, half-hidden in grass, a ditch, from which part of the earthwork had been dug; beyond that the short posts and rusty strands of the British wire-entanglements; then the tousled grass of No-Man's Land; beyond that the red line of the enemy's wire, and the low green bank of his breastwork, topped with tumbled white sandbags<sup>11</sup> standing out against the distant ridge and trees.

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<sup>11</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 180.

The advance parties at once observed that in these trenches there were conveniences unknown at Anzac. Water was supplied by pipes to positions close in rear. In several parts small tramways had been laid down for the bringing up of food and stores<sup>12</sup> from the dumps near the far end of the communication trenches, where the regimental transport nightly left them. Moreover, as the trench system was explained to them, the Australians quickly recognised that on this front the supply of sandbags, timber, iron, and of trench-stores (such as Very lights, rockets, and maps) must be sufficient to satisfy any reasonable demands. The clumsy improvised jam-tin bomb with which the Anzac troops had fought out the bloody contests at Quinn's Post and Lone Pine was now a relic of the past: the hand bomb of the British Army was now, and until the end of the war, the deadly segmented Mills grenade. In this a lever, held down while the bomb was gripped but released when it was thrown, set in action a time-fuse, which burst the missile into numerous small fragments. The supply of these, even on this quiet front, was now 52,000 to a division! The trench-mortars, though their use was at this time restricted, were of far more formidable types than those used in Gallipoli, and were not hampered by want of ammunition.

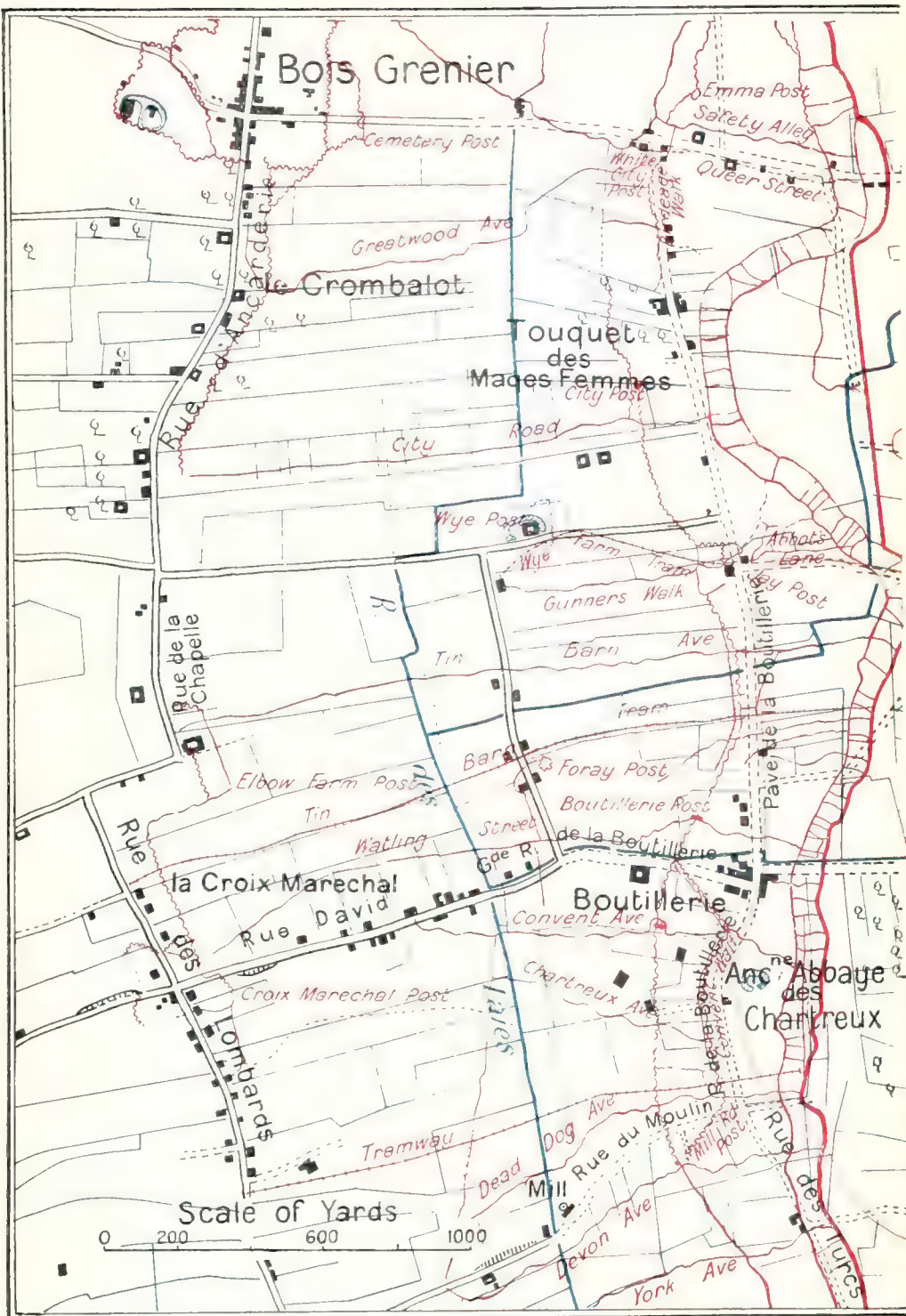
Nevertheless the men from Anzac, to whom the defences of the Western Front had often been held up as models of completeness, were sharply disillusioned. They found that the majority of the communication avenues shown on the trench maps had become waterlogged and impassable, while even those in use were often quite inadequate, a passenger through them being, in some parts of his journey, exposed from the waist upwards to the enemy's view. The tramways had fallen into disuse. The support line was almost entirely waterlogged. The construction of deep dugouts anywhere in the area had been assumed to be impossible, and no safe shelter of any other type had been provided; the tiny sand-bagged cabins, here known as "dugouts," barely gave protection against splinters. In the whole nine miles of front line

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<sup>12</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 181.

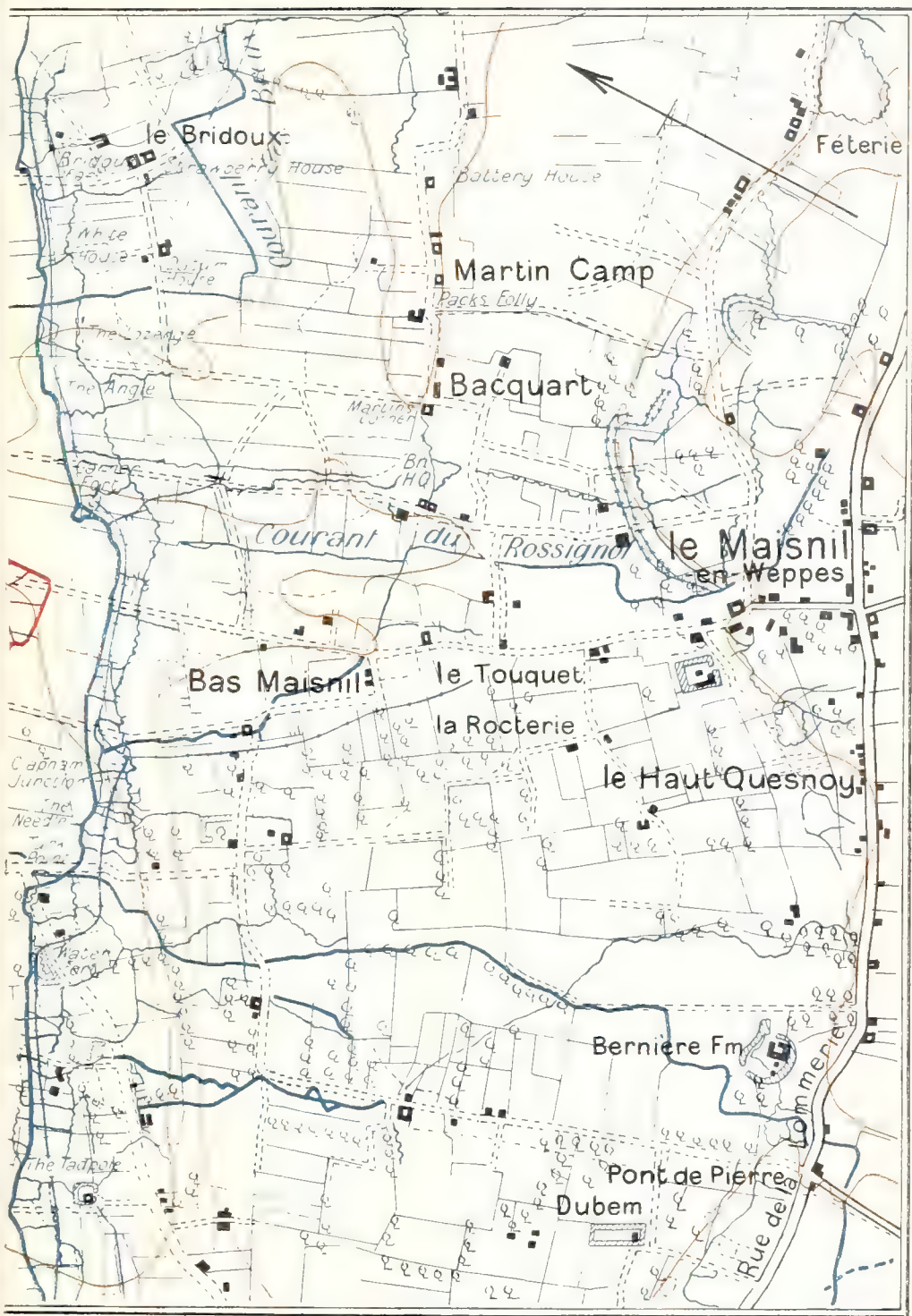


# MAP



BRITISH AND GERMAN TRENCH SYSTEMS





NEAR BOIS GRENIER, SUMMER OF 1916

WSP



shortly afterwards taken over by I Anzac Corps there was not one shelter which would withstand the impact and burst of even a moderately heavy shell. The breastwork which formed the front parapet appeared in places to be not even bullet-proof. The entanglements in front of much of the Armentières line seemed to be little better than some of those at Anzac, which had admittedly been almost valueless.<sup>13</sup> A few weeks later, when the Anzac Corps was in the line, its general staff described the barbed-wire defences as being "in most portions of our line . . . an almost negligible factor."

"Their trenches, which they consider good, are very bad," noted a staff officer of the 1st Division.<sup>14</sup> "It is the exception to find the parapet high enough for head-cover. A tall man must stoop. There are very few sniping posts or observation posts; parapets are not bullet-proof—trenches not sanitary." Men and officers from Anzac would, however, have been less critical both then and afterwards had they known the past history of those defences. The garrison of the British line was constantly changing as the "New Army" divisions arrived, and the past history of any sector was seldom known to the troops holding it. But the fact was that the line into which the Australians were coming had lately been subjected to a very wet winter. The communication trenches built up with heavy and constant labour during the dry months of 1915 had become, despite all efforts at drainage, flooded by the October and November rains. A comparison of the available accounts seems to show that on the German side the conditions in this sector had been, if anything, worse than on the British. The historian of the 17th Bavarian R.I.R., which held a sector traversed by the "River" Laies, says:<sup>15</sup>

From the end of October onwards the water-conditions in the trenches began, through the rising of the Laies stream, to be very

<sup>13</sup> On parts of the Anzac front the putting out of an adequate belt of barbed-wire had been impossible in consequence of the extreme danger to any party working in No-Man's Land. This, however, had not been the case in all parts. The Turks appear to have protected their front line on Johnston's Jolly by secretly digging a wide sap with steep sides and erecting a strong apron of barbed-wire along the bottom of it. This was unseen by, and unknown to, the Anzac troops, and would have formed a terrible obstacle.

<sup>14</sup> The trenches so described were somewhat to the north of those taken over by the I Anzac Corps, but the same criticism was constantly made in respect of the Armentières sector.

<sup>15</sup> *History of the 17th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment*, p. 38.

bad. All pumping was of no avail. The water continually rose in the trenches; a great number of dugouts became full of water, and much ammunition, bombs, and equipment, which could no longer be salvaged, was thus lost. Such dugouts as could still be occupied had to be strongly dammed where they opened into the trenches, and constantly pumped out. Where no dugouts were available the garrison had to stand the whole night on the fire-step of the breastwork. In many places the barbed-wire collapsed . . . the trenches were no longer recognisable as such—in their place lay ditches full of water. The carriage of supplies between isolated occupied dugouts was only possible by walking along the breastwork, and in the dark only our own wire-entanglement prevented men from running by mistake right over to the enemy's trenches. Between the Laies and the line lay whole expanses of water. . . . As all communication trenches were useless, supplies could only be carried up over the open country and under cover of the dark. Naturally the losses were thus increased. Indeed . . . duckboards and little bridges were laid down over the trenches, and any man who missed his footing on them fell in the water. Where little bridges were not available, the passing of the trenches involved danger to life: even if the trench-walls were in good condition, the heavy mud clinging to the boots clogged a man's movements and made it difficult to jump. The thrust of the spring-off caused the edge of the trench to collapse. Even if a man succeeded in getting one foot across the trench, it was difficult to pull the other after it—he was apt to fall finally into the water, and the muddy banks made it a heavy task for him to struggle out. . . . The method of bringing back the dead from the front line was to tie them on balks of timber, and tow them thus through the trenches and open water.

In that particular sector the Germans had been forced in certain places temporarily to abandon their front line, and in other parts to reduce the garrison. By February the normal garrisons had been restored, but as late as April, after heavy rain, the water had flooded into the front line, and lain three feet deep. The trenches not only of the British but of the Germans were therefore just emerging from conditions of which the newcomers had little conception. Any further digging into the ground had been strenuously forbidden on both sides, and each was engaged in heightening its breastwork and freeing its communication trenches from water.

But the advance parties at once recognised that, if the trenches were defective and the wire slight, there was at hand another means of defence which the conditions of Gallipoli had to a large extent debarred—the tremendously powerful assistance of the artillery. The inferiority of the British Army in this respect was rapidly vanishing—indeed the historians of German regiments in the Armentières sector claim that for



some time past the British batteries had been able to shower their shell with a profusion which the Germans, saving their own ammunition for Verdun, could not imitate. At the time when the Australians arrived, the German batteries undoubtedly had the better supply; but this was a passing condition, due to a British order, issued early in April, which enforced the strictest economy in view of the vast supply required for the coming offensive on the Somme. The stage, however, at which the British infantry lacked adequate artillery support had definitely passed. The preponderance was soon to be on the side of the Allies, if indeed they did not already possess it. The disposition of the guns was far better than on Gallipoli—they were grouped on an orthodox system, impossible at Anzac: that is to say, each sector was defended by a certain number of batteries, which, in case of a minor attack, could place an almost impenetrable curtain or "barrage" of shell-fire in front of the threatened point. In the event of a general attack all along the line their fire must, of course, be more widely dispersed; even when the enemy attacked on a narrow front, the adequacy of the protecting fire depended on the artillery receiving early and accurate information as to the exact front and location of the assault. For this purpose there was at the headquarters of every battalion in the line an attached artillery officer, who was connected by telephone with the headquarters of the group of batteries supporting that sector. Moreover in the line at Armentières each company of infantry at the front breastwork had a direct telephone to the particular battery which by night covered that sector. The company commander had the right at any time to call on this battery to fire one round by way of test, and it was ordered that the time taken by the artillery in answering this call should be reported to divisional headquarters. If attacked, the company commander was to send to the artillery the call "S.O.S.," adding the number of his trench; whereupon the supporting artillery would automatically come into action, bursting its shell, in accordance with a special scheme, along the enemy's parapet and at the other vital points in his line. If the assault occurred at night, the S.O.S. call could be sent by firing a rocket, which would burst

with a coloured star.<sup>16</sup> Three of these rockets were placed ready for firing beside the headquarters of every company in the line, but it was ordered that the S.O.S. signal must not be fired until the enemy's infantry were seen actually leaving their trenches and advancing to attack. In case of gas, another scheme was provided for the artillery, which could be called into action by another signal—"G.A.S." The approach of an enemy gas-cloud was also to be notified by the sounding of gongs and strombus horns. Thus the artillery, living some distance behind the lines and—in this sector—in comparative comfort, came to feel for the protection of their infantry a special sense of responsibility, which was greatly intensified when they became plunged for the first time into real battle. This responsibility was also strongly felt both by the flying squadron which had been allotted to the corps in order to assist the artillery and keep watch over the enemy on that sector, and also, in a measure, by the machine-gunners, a proportion of whose heavy Vickers guns were emplaced in the front line to fire obliquely along No-Man's Land. The officers and men of all these services recognised that, if they failed, they would be "letting down" their infantry; and the realisation of this fact was a constant spur to endurance and self-sacrifice.

Such, shortly described, was the front line in this quiet sector. Since its first establishment it had only twice been the scene of sharp fighting, which on each occasion took the form of an assault by British troops subsidiary to a more important British offensive elsewhere. At 3 o'clock on the 9th of May, 1915, when the British and Indians farther south attacked at Festubert, a minor attack was also made by the British from Cordonnerie Farm, just north of the "Sugar-loaf Salient," after the explosion of two mines under the German breastwork. The enemy had been outwitted by the British miners, who had worked through the clay beneath the surface loam,<sup>17</sup> and the British infantry penetrated the enemy line near Delangré Farm, a mile from Fromelles, and held on for

<sup>16</sup> The colour was occasionally changed in order to avoid imitation by the enemy. But see end of *Chap. vii* and *footnote 34 of Chap. xi*.

<sup>17</sup> Four days later the Germans began to mine through the clay. It is to be inferred from the history of the 17th Bavarian R.I.R. (*p.* 32) that they had not previously been aware that it was possible.



13. A BATTALION OF THE 6TH BRIGADE IN FRANCE, APRIL 1916

The helmets, newly issued, are covered with hessian to prevent them from shining; in the right centre can be seen three Lewis gunners holding up their guns.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ2.*



14. AN *estaminet* WITHIN 800 YARDS OF THE FIRING LINE AT  
BOIS GRENIER

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ32.*

*To face p. 108.*





15. A VIEW CLOSE BEHIND THE FRONT LINE AT BOIS GRENIER

The officer in the steel helmet is Lieutenant-Colonel W. K. S. Mackenzie, 19th Battalion.

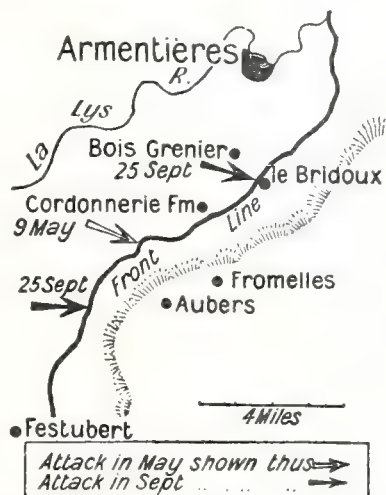
*Anst. War Memorial Official Photo, No. EZ17.*

*To face p. 109.*



a day. It had apparently been intended to reach Fromelles and thence to attack Aubers, but the troops were held up near the outset, and, after heavy loss, were forced to retire during the following night. The second attempt to enter the German trenches had been made on the 25th of September, 1915, the opening day of the Battle of Loos, when the British 8th Division attacked south-east of Bois Grenier, and, after exploding a mine, penetrated the German line about Le Bridoux. A similar feint was made south of the Sugar-loaf by the Meerut (Indian) Division and the 60th Brigade (20th British Division). In both cases the attackers, after holding for a time a sector of the enemy's line, were partly surrounded and lost a number of men killed or captured.<sup>18</sup> By the time when the Australians entered the line the story of these operations had been almost completely forgotten; it remained only in the vague rumour that, quiet though the sector now was, certain famous English regiments spoke of it with dreadful memories of some futile and tragic attack.

Among the fighting units on the Western Front there was at this time a considerable amount of pessimism as to the possibility of ever "breaking through" the German line. Since the two trench-lines had been established across France, the several attempts to pierce them had only resulted either in complete failure or, what was sometimes worse, the creation of a salient, liable to be fired into from three sides and therefore expensive and dangerous to hold. The infantry had come to look upon the trench-lines both of their own side and of

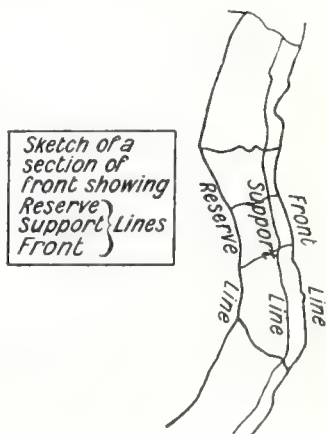


<sup>18</sup> The 60th Brigade (which ten months later held the line north of the Australians in the Battle of Fromelles) had 19 officers and 542 men (parts of the 12th Bn., Rifle Brigade, and 6th Bn., King's Shropshire Light Infantry) in this attack; their losses appear to have been 11 officers and 391 men. See *The History of the 20th (Light) Division*, by Captain V. E. Inglefield, p. 22.

the enemy as unbreakable, and the opinion was constantly expressed that the end of the war would find both armies still facing one another practically in their present lines.

The area had long since known only trench-warfare, mostly in its quietest form. Nevertheless, here as elsewhere, every commander and staff responsible for even the smallest sector was expected, as a first duty, to draw up a scheme for its defence. It was at this time a settled principle that, if the enemy attacked, he must be met and resisted at the front line; if his assault was so strong that part of the front line was lost, it must as soon as possible be retaken by a counter-attack. Seeing that the enemy might crush the garrison of the firing line with bombardment, the support line had been built at from seventy to a hundred yards in rear, that being the distance which, according to the opinion held early in the war, would render it impossible for the enemy to bombard both lines at the same time. The intention had been that between the front and support lines there should be communication trenches every seventy-five yards, so that during heavy bombardment the front-line garrison might retire to the support line, returning immediately the enemy lifted his gun-fire and advanced to the attack. Against the event of the

enemy seizing both these lines there had been provided a third, where the brigade reserves could be concentrated for counter-attack. This third position had to be sufficiently distant to force the enemy to re-form his attacking infantry before reaching it, and thus give time for the defending reserves to launch their counter-stroke. It had accordingly been sited at from 300 to 500 yards behind the front, but at the time when the advance parties of Australians saw it this line was only half-finished. Certain "strong-points" or redoubts had also been constructed between it and the forward lines with the intention of breaking up the front of a successful enemy attack

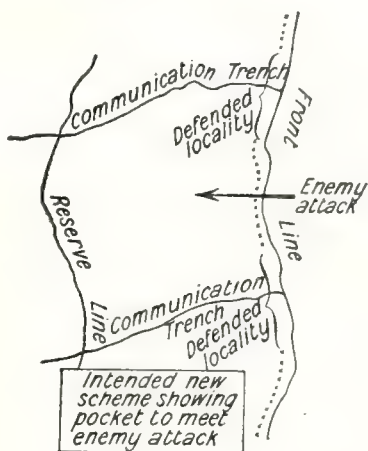


as it made its way across the open country in rear of the support lines. These defences together formed the "front-line system." About a mile in rear was a further line, consisting partly of separate posts, partly of consecutive trench-line—to be garrisoned, in emergency, by certain allotted companies of the brigade reserves.<sup>19</sup> In rear of this again was another ungarrisoned line of posts, mostly round the bridge-heads of the Lys.

At the time when the Anzac troops arrived, it was recognised that the increasing power of the artillery had rendered obsolete this system of defence. It was now proposed to garrison only selected lengths of the front line, each at the head of a communication trench, leaving the spaces between to be guarded only by a few sentries, but thoroughly covered by fire from the garrisoned portions. The ungarrisoned portions were to be left open at the rear, with a barrier of barbed-wire in place of a parados, so that if the enemy seized them he could be fired upon from farther back. If, having taken the front line, he attempted to continue his advance, the plan was to entrap him in the pocket formed by the reserve line, 300 yards in rear, and the communication trenches on either flank.

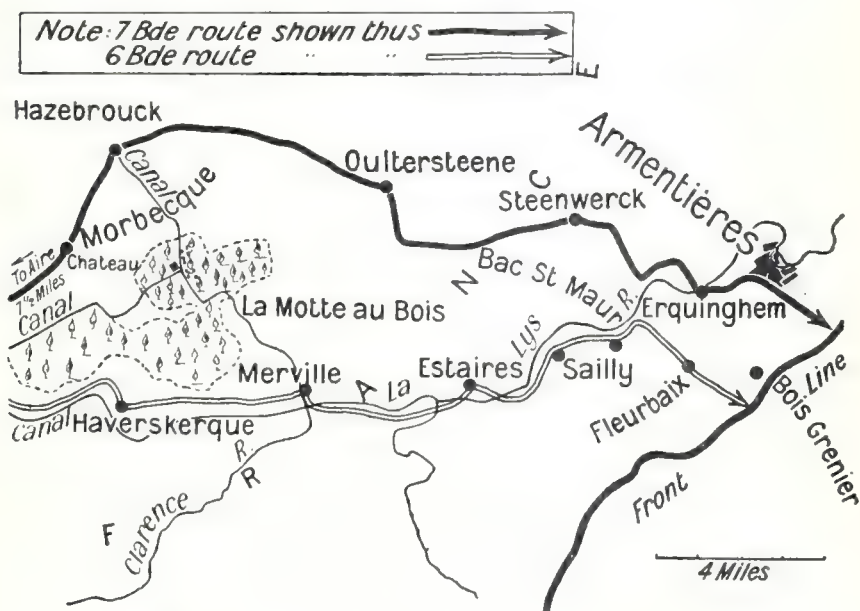
No attempt had yet been made, however, to carry out this change of policy. A copy of the old defence scheme of each battalion's sector, and of the orders for each company in the event of attack, were kept at the battalion and company headquarters respectively.

One of the chief duties of the advance parties was to have these schemes explained to them and to take them over on behalf of each relieving battalion or company. While they were thus making themselves acquainted with these matters,



<sup>19</sup> Some of the posts were normally occupied by "caretaker" parties, each of a few men.

their brigades were marching to the front. The outstanding feature of the country immediately south of Hazebrouck was the forest surrounding the small village and large *château* of La Motte-au-Bois.<sup>20</sup> Few roads led through the forest, and the route taken by the troops in reaching the Lys was therefore either past its northern limits through the village of



Steenwerck, five miles west of Armentières, or round its southern edge through the small towns of Haverskerque, Merville, and Estaires, all on the Lys and the last two within reach of the enemy's heavy guns. On April 4th the 6th and 7th Brigades, marching along the cobbled roads, reached Haverskerque and Oultersteene, south and north of the forest respectively. Each brigade was for the first time marching with its full equipment, and each battalion was followed by its waggons and travelling kitchens, the chimneys of which were smoking and the dinners cooking as they went. The men's feet were soft, and—as in the case of almost all the succeeding battalions, brigades, and divisions—a number of men fell out on the first day, to be either picked up by the ambulances or to follow on slowly after the column. It was during this

<sup>20</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 184.



march that the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, General Joffre, who happened to be visiting the British area, reviewed some of the Australian troops. On the second day the two brigades reached Sailly and Erquinghem respectively, and thence on the night of April 7th the relief was begun, the 21st Australian Infantry Battalion (of Gellibrand's 6th Brigade) relieving the 10th Lincolnshire near Fleurbaix by 11.5 p.m., and the 27th and 28th Australian Battalions (of Paton's, or 7th, Brigade) taking the place of the 20th and 21st Northumberland Fusiliers near Rue Marle, Armentières. Three days later the 23rd Battalion (of Gellibrand's brigade) relieved the remaining British battalion in the Fleurbaix sector, and the 5th Brigade (Holmes's) came into the Bois Grenier sector, between the 6th and 7th Brigades, relieving the 103rd. On April 11th the staff of the 2nd Australian Division under General Legge relieved that of the 34th and became responsible for the divisional front. Although General Birdwood's headquarters' staff had since the beginning of April been established in the *château* and village of La Motte-au-Bois, the Anzac divisions were for the time being controlled by Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Fergusson<sup>21</sup> and the staff of the II Corps. On April 13th they were transferred to the I Anzac Corps; and during the next week the 1st Division, under General Walker, coming forward by the same routes on to the right of the 2nd, relieved the southernmost brigade of the latter and the northernmost of the 35th Division.<sup>22</sup> On April 20th General Walker and his staff took over the divisional headquarters at Sailly. The two Australian divisions were by these stages brought into the line side by side, each with two brigades in the front line and one in reserve. The New Zealand Division lay behind them training.

Before the New Zealand Division entered the line it had become practicable—probably by the postponement to July of the main Allied offensive—to send it to Amiens to take part

<sup>21</sup> Gen. Sir Charles Fergusson, Bt., G.C.M.G., K.C.B., D.S.O., M.V.O. Commanded 5th Div., 1913/15; II Corps, 1915/16; XVII Corps, 1916/18; subsequently Governor-General of New Zealand. Officer of British Regular Army; of Kilkerran, Ayrshire, Scotland; b. Edinburgh, 17 Jan., 1865.

<sup>22</sup> The "Bantams." Second Army had, on April 6, reported to G.H.Q. that, in consequence of the backwardness of its training, the 1st Australian Division would not be fit to enter the line until the end of the month. Eventually, however, the time-table of reliefs arranged by G.H.Q. on March 22 was, in the main, adhered to.

in the projected attack. This course was on April 26th proposed by G.H.Q., which justly placed a high value on that magnificent division. The commander of the Second Army, Sir Herbert Plumer, however, informed the staff at G.H.Q. "most definitely" that the division was "not sufficiently trained for any offensive at present. In two and a half months from now it ought to be." Consequently the arrangement previously made was adhered to, the 17th Division, from the left flank of the Australians, being sent to join the great concentration on the Somme; the New Zealand Division on May 20th took over the line immediately in front of Armentières on the left of the Australians. The I Anzac Corps then held nine miles of front with its three divisions in line, their left being on the Lys north-east of Armentières, and their right—which was now also the right of the Second Army—facing the low ridge and the villages of Aubers and Fromelles which were then in German occupation. The actual boundary was opposite a wide protrusion of the German line, known from its shape as the Sugar-loaf Salient. At this point the Anzac flank touched that of the XI Corps of the First Army.



On April 25th, the first anniversary of the Landing,<sup>23</sup> the old army-commander, who had had experience of dominion troops in the Boer War, and whom the Australians on their side came afterwards to regard with much respect and affection, visited some of the brigades, and assured them of the admiration of the army in France and of its gladness to welcome them and fight beside them.

At this juncture were attached the "corps" or "army" units which had been providing certain services in this area for the previous corps. Some of these belonged to branches of the service for which there was no provision—or insufficient

<sup>23</sup> Known already as "Anzac Day," the name under which this day of memory for their dead has ever since been observed in Australia.

—in the A.I.F. Such were an anti-aircraft section, "Army Troops" company, field-survey company, certain supply columns and sub-parks,<sup>24</sup> and a section of the Second Army's bridging train.<sup>25</sup> The two Australian divisions were now joined by their own motor-transport, which had already been serving for the best part of a year.<sup>26</sup> Motor ambulances

<sup>24</sup> An anti-aircraft section consisted of two guns mounted on motor-waggons for shooting at aeroplanes. An "Army Troops" company was a body of engineers for works in stationary warfare; a "labour battalion" was also provided, chiefly for road-making. The field-survey company was for surveying and sketching, and for locating by sound or "flash" the positions of hostile batteries. The supply columns and ammunition sub-parks were motor transport companies for carrying respectively food and ammunition from railroad to divisional and other "refilling points." They were required for the New Zealand Division, heavy artillery, and "corps troops."

<sup>25</sup> The Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train, then in Egypt, was not actually a unit of the A.I.F., but of the Australian Navy.

<sup>26</sup> As, however, this only comprised two ammunition sub-parks and one supply column, a British supply column had to be provided for the 2nd Division. The history of the Australian mechanical transport service up to this time had been briefly as follows.

**MECHANICAL TRANSPORT SERVICE.** In September, 1914, when Australia was called upon to furnish certain L. of C. units for the 1st Division, although it was known that the division should have its "ammunition-park" and "supply column," very little was known of their duties or of the probable nature of their service. Lieut.-Colonel W. H. Tunbridge (of Toorak, Vic.) was appointed as commander of the ammunition-park (to be known as 8th Company, A.A.S.C.); and was commissioned to raise its 6 officers and 468 other ranks in New South Wales and Queensland. Lieut.-Colonel A. Moon (of Brisbane, Q'land) was similarly commissioned to raise 4 officers and 244 other ranks for the supply column in Victoria and South Australia. An article in *The New Zealand Military Journal* provided Tunbridge with some of the knowledge urgently required concerning this then little-known branch of the service. Nearly 200 vehicles were required, and a Motor-Transport Board was accordingly formed to inspect and purchase them, and to provide the necessary "mobile workshops" and accessories. The Board had no data to guide its choice, and the lorries purchased included many of foreign and some even of German make, for which standard parts were subsequently unobtainable, and which were therefore eventually taken over by the authorities in England for service there.

Only the "supply" and "artillery" sections of the two companies were landed in Egypt (their ship, after it had left Alexandria, being actually recalled in order to drop them); the remainder landed at Avonmouth in England on 15 February, 1915, and went into camp at Romsey. Here the units remained until 23 April, being mainly exercised by hauling from pits near Romsey gravel for making roads in the camps on Salisbury Plain. The inhabitants treated them with great kindness, the wife of a local doctor and others organising and equipping a club for them. As the spring advanced, they were moved into tents in a neighbouring district, Stanbridge Earls, and on June 10 were warned for service in France. Their varied collection of lorries was exchanged for standard types, the ammunition-park receiving 87 Peerless 3-ton lorries, and the supply-column 46 Peerless 3-ton and 14 Daimler 30-cwt. They retained the mobile workshops brought from Australia, which were considered by the companies to be of better design than the British, the machinery being driven by the lorry engine and the lathes and drills more powerful. The Australian store vehicles, however, were of little use and were exchanged for Maudslayi lorries.

Renumbered as part of the British Army—"Nos. 300 and 301 Mechanical Transport Companies, A.S.C., Aust. A.S.C."—they reached Rouen on July 8 and subsequent days, and were at once sent north to act as motor-transport for the 17th Division of the V Corps. At this juncture, however, the motor-transport of the British armies in France was being transferred from the control of the divisions to that of the several army corps. Colonel Tunbridge became commander



were also sent from a British motor-ambulance column for attachment to the Australian field ambulances, three to each.<sup>27</sup> Certain of the "Army" and L. of C. units supplied by Australia were brought into the Anzac area: the mining, at first carried out by the 172nd British Tunnelling Company, to which were attached a number of Australian pioneers, was handed over in the middle of May to the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company. The 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Station was at once established in the Collège du Coeur Sacré, in Estaires, and the 2nd in mid-June in the open fields beside the railway at Trois Arbres near Steenwerck. The 1st Australian Flying Squadron had reached Egypt, but was retained there, and for nearly two years the squadrons attached to both I and II Anzac Corps were British. The Australian siege batteries were near Arras, twenty-five miles south,<sup>28</sup> and the four batteries of heavy artillery attached to I Anzac were accordingly all British.

of the V Corps Ammunition Park; the 8th Company (301st), under Captain J. Hamilton (of Strathfield, N.S.W.), became the 17th Divisional "Ammunition Sub-Park"; and the 9th (300th), under Colonel Moon, the 17th Divisional "Supply Column." This reorganisation resulted in an economy of about half the men and lorries of the ammunition-park, and part of the personnel of the supply column. The commander of the V Corps—then Lieutenant-General Allenby—had formed a high opinion of these Australian companies, and through his support, and the active assistance of General Plumer of the Second Army, Colonel Tunbridge managed to obtain leave to form a second sub-park out of the men thus saved, on condition "that it should be equal to the first." Allenby expressed in writing his readiness to employ any Australian company that might be so formed; but the second sub-park (under Captain A. Wynyard-Joss, of Brisbane) was allotted to the 23rd Division and served with it in the First Army area, the 17th Divisional companies working at Steenvorde, Voormezele, Godewaersvelde, Busseboom, Flêtre, Watten, Poperinghe, and elsewhere in the Ypres and Bailleul areas (Second Army).

When the Australian divisions arrived in France, the 17th Ammunition Sub-Park and 17th Divisional Supply Column were transferred to the 1st Australian Division, and the 23rd Ammunition Sub-Park to the 2nd. They thus took the place of British units which had been forming in England for these divisions. The Australian companies, however, during their service in France, had been gradually reinforced by a proportion of British personnel. Moreover, when the 4th and 5th Divisions afterwards came to France, they were served at first by British companies specially allotted to them. The 3rd Division brought its own companies from Australia; but it was not until 1917 that Australia supplied practically the whole of the motor transport serving her troops.

A small printing section formed by these units worked for the V Corps (and also produced a trench journal, *The Honk*).

<sup>27</sup> Motor ambulances had been sent both by Australia and New Zealand to Egypt, where, though of a somewhat nondescript character, they proved of great use. Under the British system, however, the transport of medical units was organised as part, not of those units, but of the transport service.

<sup>28</sup> The 54th Battery had left England for France on Feb. 26 and the 55th on March 2. They were now at Maroeuil, where on March 21 and 25 the 55th had been sharply shelled by the enemy, losing several men. During the same month a billet of this battery at Mont St. Eloi was shelled, 3 men being killed and 16 wounded.



## CHAPTER V

### TRENCH-WARFARE AT ARMENTIÈRES

THE Australian soldier in France was not at first called upon for any effort comparable to that of the landing on Gallipoli. Nevertheless he went to his new task with a stern consciousness that he was now facing the principal enemy. The Germans more than any other had been responsible for the war, were the most formidable in the struggle, and were likely to be by far the most dangerous in case of an adverse finish. Australian soldiers had no doubt that this enemy, if victorious, would dismember the British Empire, and so bring ruin to most of its constituent countries, including the southern homeland to which they were so passionately attached. Moreover, the deliberate ruthlessness of the German military policy in Belgium, hateful enough in actual fact to Australian minds, but undoubtedly exaggerated in the reports of local civilians and in the world's press, had caused the troops to regard the whole race as fiendish. The Australians, like the Canadians, the Scots, and other peoples whose national characteristics included strong determination, did not easily forgive and forget, and were in no mood to deal lightly with the enemy.

The higher staffs on both sides were persuaded that their soldiers would fight more eagerly if they were fed with suitable propaganda, and, soon after the arrival of the I Anzac Corps, Major Butler, its chief intelligence officer, received from G.H.Q. a consignment of stories—doubtless well authenticated—concerning German atrocities, together with a request that lectures should be prepared from this material and delivered to the troops. Butler, a chivalrous Englishman with a fine record of exploration and adventure in Arabia, asked “what moral he was expected to draw in the lectures? Was it that our troops should do likewise?”, and pitched the whole consignment into his waste-paper basket. The attitude of the Australian soldier towards this enemy certainly needed

no additional exacerbation, and though it was somewhat modified when the two sides came into enforced contact after heavy fighting, it remained, on the whole, fierce to the end. The average Australian was not one to talk freely of his high intentions or even to hint that he possessed any; his affectation was all the other way. Nevertheless a letter picked up on the battlefield at Pozières<sup>1</sup> gives a fair indication of the feelings which, though seldom confessed, existed deep in the hearts of the majority.

July 17th.

Dear Mother, sisters, brothers, and Auntie Kate,

As we are about to go into work that must be done, I want to ask you, if anything should happen to me, not to worry. . . One thing you can say—that you lost one doing his little bit for a good cause. . . . I am willing and prepared to give my life. . . . My health is good and my mind is clear.

Confident though the Australian soldier was, and though his frank assurance showed itself in gait and speech, it was not without considerable respect that he first faced this renowned adversary. He recognised that, brave and stubborn though the individual Turkish soldier had been, the German with his extraordinary powers of application and organisation was an opponent infinitely more formidable. Yet the Australian had never any doubt that, when he himself had learnt the business, he would, given adequate support, be more than equal to his enemy. Though many illusions faded, he never wavered in his conviction that the Allies would win the war.

That part of the Anzac infantry which had served in Gallipoli at once observed many differences between the trench-warfare on the Armentières front and that to which they were accustomed. Some of these arose from the fact

<sup>1</sup> Written by L/Cpl. M. J. O'Connell (of Port Pirie, S. Aust.), of the 10th Battalion, who was killed in action on 23 July, 1916.

The following letter was found on Pte. H. E. Williams (of Collingwood, Vic.), 60th Bn., who was mortally wounded near Fromelles on 19th July, 1916—

July 17th.

Dear Mother,

The time is near at hand for a great offensive and, should I fall, I will be proud to know I did so in the cause of Righteousness and Justice. . . . This will be a great blow to you, but cheer up. . . . Dad, I have kept your wishes, neither smoked nor taken liquor. Give my regards to all the boys and girls. So goodbye for a short time. . . .

that, whereas in Gallipoli every inch of the British foothold was precious, in France a withdrawal even of five miles would not have meant irretrievable disaster. No-Man's Land was therefore much wider, the tension less acute, and sniping less keen. No attack short of a big offensive was likely to be made by day, and an offensive on a large scale could scarcely be prepared without some concentration of troops and guns having been observed at least several weeks beforehand. Consequently by day the lines at Armentières, compared with those in Gallipoli, appeared to sleep. Moreover, on the Western Front, as trench-warfare had become more complicated, it had been more and more entrusted to specialists. For grenade fighting every battalion now maintained not only a special bombing platoon of thirty-three men under a bombing officer, but the same number of bombers in each company. For scouting, intelligence, and sniping—that is, for almost the whole of the normal intelligent activity of an infantry unit—each battalion had similarly formed its “scout platoon,” under the battalion intelligence officer.<sup>2</sup> Mining, which in the Armentières sector had been actively proceeding for a year past,<sup>3</sup> was not, as in Gallipoli, a matter of constant personal interest to every officer and man in the sector, but was carried out with close secrecy by tunnelling companies, a special branch of the engineers. Sniping was, of course, undertaken by the infantry, but chiefly by men specially trained in schools in the back areas; the ordinary sentries and observers by day hardly fired at all.

Consequently the sound of a rifle shot rarely broke the silence. In part of the line taken over by the 1st Division a convention had existed by which the ordinary sentries

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<sup>2</sup> This platoon, consisting of one officer and thirty other ranks, was to be exempt from ordinary fatigue duties (this was the chief inducement to remain in it), and was generally attached to battalion headquarters. It comprised expert observers, snipers, and scouts, all specially chosen. The duty of the observers and snipers was “the location and subduing of enemy snipers, the location of enemy machine-guns and observing posts, general observation, and the reporting of progress or otherwise of work on the enemy's front and support trenches.” The patrolmen (for scouting in No-Man's Land) were to be about six in number, and were to be obtained by calling for volunteers from among the battalion scouts.

<sup>3</sup> Still earlier mines appear to have been dug by the infantry—very gallantly but unskillfully—close beneath the surface. The engineers, however, discovered that they could tunnel safely through the grey clay underlying the surface loam. The Germans appear to have learnt this only after their trench opposite Cordonnerie had been blown up by a British mine on 9 May, 1915. *History of 17 Bav. R.I.R.*, p. 32; and *History of 21st Bav. R.I.R.*, pp. 31-2.

refrained from firing on the enemy in his own lines, no matter how fully he exposed himself—the reason given being that so long as the enemy was not stirred up he would not retaliate. This policy was general in sectors held by French troops, and, although it was seldom adopted by the British,<sup>4</sup> the daytime sniping in France was much slacker than on the Peninsula. Consequently the old Gallipoli troops, with recollections of the extreme vigilance of Anzac, and partly in reaction from their earlier anxiety, were for a time inclined to be contemptuous of the conditions which they found in the British line. The tendency then existing in the British Army to relegate the intelligent functions of a soldier to a number of picked and specially-trained men was not one that suited colonial soldiers. From the moment they went into the line, a considerable proportion of the Australian infantrymen, and not merely the trained snipers, were on the look-out for good targets. As the front line had been ill-provided with loop-holes, they could not, at first, easily be restrained from the dangerous practice of shooting over the parapet.<sup>5</sup> Sniping undoubtedly became much keener. The historian of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R., which then lay opposite the old "Convent" wall and Boutillerie, notes that in May, although the artillery-fire had abated, the regiment suffered especially through machine-guns and sniping-fire. Of eighteen men lost by its 1st Battalion between May 15th and 20th, fifteen were sniped or hit by machine-guns.<sup>6</sup> On their side the

<sup>4</sup> The average British soldier was a friendly fellow, and—except in the case of the Scots—was probably only restrained by the frowns of the staff from constantly "palling" with his enemy. It was remarked that, on the German side, the Saxon troops were almost always ready to make friends. The Prussians were far sterner; but even they were probably only prevented from occasional fraternisation by the displeasure of the higher staff. At Christmas 1916 a repetition of the friendly exhibitions which had taken place the previous year was sternly prohibited by the supreme command on both sides. In spite of this the British troops at some points appear to have been ready to show goodwill on Christmas Day. "Attempts at fraternisation," says the historian of the 17th Bav. R.I.R., "which the enemy on Christmas Day (1916) desired to make with the portion of this regiment which happened to be in the front line, were repulsed by (German) shrapnel fire." What would have been the effect on the world's history if the natural kindliness of the majority of fighting soldiers had been allowed to find its full expression, instead of being sternly quenched by leaders in distant headquarters, may be a matter for interesting speculation.

<sup>5</sup> Some of the more spirited among the troops did not like the prohibition which was placed on this practice and on the use of snipers' loop-holes by other than snipers.

<sup>6</sup> Only one was killed. (*History of 21st. Bav. R.I.R.*, p. 45.) The 1st Aust. Inf. Bde. was then holding the Australian line at this point, with the 3rd and 4th Battalions in the front trenches.



Australian troops soon learned that the German sniper, though slow to shoot, was methodical and deadly. If a man exposed his head above the parapet for more than a few seconds, or showed himself several times at the same point, he was likely to be hit through the brain. The following entries in the diary of the 4th Battalion bear witness to this:

May 12. 7 p.m. Private Smith<sup>7</sup> shot through head while looking over parapet.

May 13. 4 a.m. Private Matthews<sup>8</sup> shot through head while observing over parapet.

The breastwork in many parts was not provided with loop-holes; even where it was, if the loop-hole was used carelessly or frequently it was liable to be detected by some German sniper, who, when next it was used, would fire into it several steel "armour-piercing" bullets, which would penetrate a steel plate or several thicknesses of sandbags. By increasing the width of the parapet and the number of loop-holes, the Australian divisions quickly reduced this danger.<sup>9</sup> Armour-piercing bullets were about this time provided for British snipers also, and after a long struggle the Australians succeeded in forcing the enemy snipers to abandon many of their loop-holes, and to shoot with much greater caution; but the morale of the German soldier was not in the least affected, and never at this stage did the Anzac troops obtain a mastery approaching that gained and held over the Turks in Monash Valley.

At Anzac the opposing trenches had at certain points run so close that hand-grenades were continually thrown by both sides: at Quinn's Post for seven and a half months bombing had never ceased. At Armentières the German lines were nowhere nearly within bomb throw; several of the salients on one side or the other were within range of rifle-grenades. These had been unknown at Anzac, but in France were allotted to bombers, as were a few bomb-catapults which still survived in that sector. At "touchy" points there was an occasional exchange of these missiles; the Australian salients were also bombed with fair regularity by German trench-

<sup>7</sup> Pte. A. E. Smith (No. 3227; 4th Bn.). Orchardist; of Freeman's Reach, Windsor, N.S.W.; b. Rochester, Vic., 1891. Killed in action, 12 May, 1916.

<sup>8</sup> Pte. A. J. Matthews (No. 1607; 4th Bn.). Labourer; b. Goulburn, N.S.W., 1886. Killed in action, 13 May, 1916.

<sup>9</sup> See diary of 12th Bn., Rifle Brigade, quoted at end of *Chap. x*.

mortars. The fire of these "mine-throwers"<sup>10</sup> and "grenade-throwers" was particularly galling, especially that of the medium mine-thrower. The projectiles had thinner walls than shells of the same size, and contained a proportionately heavier charge of high explosive. The bombs of the heavy mine-throwers were commonly known as "aerial torpedoes," and were the most destructive missile the enemy ever possessed.<sup>11</sup> The medium mortars, however, were much more frequently used. Their bombs were nicknamed "rum jars"; with a little experience, troops could usually detect the slight report of their discharge (little more than a click) and catch sight of the missile turning over and over on its high course through the air; at night it left a trail of sparks. Men were thus sometimes able to judge its probable course and dive into cover before it exploded. But this did not prevent harassing losses, and much nerve strain. Ordinarily the fire would have been answered by the British trench-mortars, which were quite as effective; but the 35th Division had been ordered to take its mortars with it, and the Australians as yet possessed none, their heavy and medium batteries being still in training and the light Stokes guns not having yet arrived. Consequently the reply had to be made by the artillery.

Normally another active branch of trench-warfare would have been the artillery strife. At Armentières the field artillery of each division was distributed behind its sector in three groups, each consisting of a brigade of field-guns (now including a howitzer battery). Most of the guns of each group were behind their allotted sector, but a few were generally placed well to the flank, so as to enfilade No-Man's Land. About half the shells allotted to the field-guns were now high-explosive, so that they could not only protect their infantry with a shrapnel barrage, or shell any fatigue party of the enemy seen at work within their range, but could moderately damage the enemy's parapet, or destroy houses used by him. The howitzers, however, were better instruments

<sup>10</sup> *Minenwerfer*, the German name for their trench-mortar. The apparatus for throwing the smaller "pineapple" bomb was called *granatenwerfer*, "grenade-thrower."

<sup>11</sup> A crater caused by the explosion of a heavy mine-thrower bomb is shown in Vol. XII, plate 186.

for such demolition, and these were generally employed on targets behind the enemy's line, such as buildings or communication trenches. The corps heavy artillery—of which the main part consisted of three batteries of 4.7-inch guns, then fast becoming obsolete—was largely employed in what were known as “counter-battery” operations, that is to say, in endeavouring to destroy, or at least silence, known enemy batteries. It was a principle of trench-warfare in France that, if the enemy molested any portion of the garrison by shelling or bombing, the unit thus suffering could call upon its artillery to retaliate. The retaliation was to be primarily upon the enemy battery which was firing, if this was known or could be immediately discovered; if not, it was to be on some sensitive or vulnerable part of his line—a known headquarters, centre of transport activity, some house believed to be a billet of troops, or possibly an exposed and sensitive point in his front line. During April, however, as has been already related, the allowance of artillery ammunition had been drastically reduced on the British side, it being necessary to husband supplies for the forthcoming Somme offensive, and the Second Army having been forced to spend more than its share in the course of heavy fighting on a minor scale at Ypres. Thus, in spite of the fact that the British shell-supply was now, probably, more abundant—in proportion to the size of the two armies—than the German, the normal shell-expenditure of each field-gun on the Anzac front had actually been cut down to some three rounds a day. The supply for the 4.7-inch guns was very scarce. The German batteries, on the other hand, occasionally fired several hundred shells, chiefly into the back areas. The Australian infantry had not at this time complete confidence in their own artillery, knowing that the brigades of the 2nd Division had never previously been in action, and that the men of the howitzer batteries of both Australian divisions were entirely new to their field-pieces, having been taken over in Egypt straight from the ammunition columns. The attempts of the batteries during these first weeks to retaliate with a dozen harmless shells for galling losses inflicted by German trench-mortars caused their infantry, in some cases, to be unfairly critical.

In this quiet sector much of the gun-fire normally heard by day was directed at aeroplanes, which on each bright morning or afternoon came out to photograph their opponents' trenches and back areas, or to direct by wireless the fire of howitzer or heavy batteries upon targets hidden from artillery observers in their own ordinary posts. At this stage of the war German airmen were generally assumed to have established a certain degree of superiority with their Fokker aeroplanes, but there was no evidence of such ascendancy on the Armentières front. The presence of an aeroplane, whether over back area or front line, was immediately indicated not only by the drone of the engine, but by the fire of anti-aircraft batteries, which marked the course of their opponents' 'planes with a trail of shell-bursts. The anti-aircraft gunners at this time with the Anzac Corps reported that a large majority of the machines sighted by them in the forward area were British. Combats in the air were more frequent than in Gallipoli, and the anti-aircraft gunnery, especially that of the Germans, was much more formidable and effective. The manner in which some of the British pilots continued to reconnoitre at low heights, from 2,000 to 6,000 feet, in the face of the enemy's anti-aircraft batteries, was a constant cause of admiration among the Anzac infantry.

We saw one of our 'planes simply soused in shell (wrote an Australian on April 24). Every minute or so about a dozen shells seemed to go whizzing at it and past it—a pin-point flash and then an ugly black burst—but it simply came back again to face the music for at least an hour. They must have fired 150 shells, or 200, at it. "They may get any of the others, but I'd be dead sick if they got him," one of our men said. "Well, I haven't got his 'guts'! That chap clean beats me," said another.<sup>12</sup>

Except for such interludes, life in the front line in this sector by day involved little active fighting. As in Gallipoli, men came to look upon it almost as city-life, the companies in the front line corresponding to dwellers in the city's actual centre, and the battalion staff at its headquarters, half-a-mile in rear, and the other higher staffs, miles farther back, representing more fortunate persons with homes in the suburbs or mansions in the country. These would visit the "city"

<sup>12</sup> The same diarist notes that the officer who had been flying on this occasion afterwards visited the artillery, and was found to be a Canadian. He could not remember having been shelled on one day more than on any other. His own opinion of his task was—"it's the only sport on earth." To the infantry he, and many of his colleagues, were known as "The Mad Major."





16. AUSTRALIAN INFANTRYMEN SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVAL IN FRANCE  
*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ18.*



17. THE CONVENT WALL, SOUTH OF ARMENTIÈRES  
*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ50.* *To face p. 124.*



18. THE BREASTWORKS SOUTH-EAST OF ARMENTIÈRES

The men sitting on the duckboards in the foreground are searching their shirts for vermin.

*To face p. 125.*

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ9.*

daily, or, in the case of the more distant, perhaps only weekly, as their business routine made it necessary. The battalion headquarters, in sandbag shelters 600 to 800 yards back along some main avenue of communication, was the home of the battalion commander, senior major, adjutant, medical officer, signal and intelligence officers, and, sometimes, of the chaplain,<sup>13</sup> with battalion "runners" (messengers), signallers, and other headquarters' personnel. The officers there had a small mess, but Australian messes were always much simpler than those of the British Army. Liquor other than whisky was seldom provided, and not always that. Tea was the normal drink at all meals, and the food, except for an occasional tin of peaches or pears from the canteen, was generally much the same as that of the men. Similarly, Australian infantry commanders often expected their company officers, when in the line, to take all their meals in the trenches of their respective platoons and not in the messes; the object being that the officer should live among his men, and fare simply as they did.

Communication throughout both forward and back areas was normally by telephone; but the free use of this system forward of battalion headquarters had to be placed under drastic restrictions in consequence of the sudden discovery that the Germans were using listening apparatus which enabled them to detect messages passing in the forward area. By this means, for example, on the 1st of January, 1916, the 21st Bavarian R.I.R. south of Armentières learned that part of its rear defences was to be bombarded, and forthwith took steps to evacuate them. The same regiment about the same time found in its wire a British listening plant.<sup>14</sup> To avoid being overheard both sides were now providing metallic circuits for their telephones, and important messages to the front line were usually sent in simple code or disguised with slang and topical allusions which would be incomprehensible to the enemy.

The routine of the day was somewhat as follows.<sup>15</sup> In the front line it began with the morning "stand to arms,"

<sup>13</sup> Chaplains, however, were often quartered with the brigade staff.

<sup>14</sup> *History of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R.*, pp. 38 and 40.

<sup>15</sup> A good description with fuller details of the life of an Australian battalion in the trenches is given in *The Fortieth (History of the 40th Battalion, A.I.F.)*, by F. C. Green, pp. 10-20. Life, at the front from the point of view of an artillery officer is perhaps best depicted in *The Natural Man*, by Patrick Miller.

when the whole garrison took up its position on the fire-steps, (as a man of the 11th Battalion<sup>16</sup> wrote) "rifles loaded, bayonets fixed, all ready for any bloody business—that never comes. Then the faint grey light begins to filter through everything, a few birds begin to twitter . . . and the sun's rays steal up through the mist." After an hour came the order to "stand down." The men usually cleaned their rifles shortly after dawn; ate their breakfasts, consisting of a slice of luke-warm bacon on bread or biscuit, with hot tea drunk from their mess-tins; washed their tea things (often in the dregs of the tea) and themselves in water from a ditch or a shell-hole. At this stage of the war there was maintained in every trench-bay of the front line at least one group of six or seven men under an N.C.O. Of these one was always on two-hours sentry duty, standing on the fire-step to keep watch on No-Man's Land through a periscope fixed on the parapet. The rest would probably be required during the morning for some front-line fatigue—making "knife-rests" (*chevaux-de-frise*) to be put out after dark in the barbed-wire entanglement, or repairing damaged portions of the front or support line, within easy call of the front-line sentries. Fatigues farther back had to be provided by the battalions in reserve, or by the pioneers; if parties were large, they usually worked at night, since by day they were likely to be seen and shelled. For the front-line garrison it was a rule that equipment, except packs, must always be worn, but during fatigues, or when sleeping by day, men were allowed to take off all except their gas-masks, provided that their gear was beside them ready to be instantly put on. Their midday meal—tea with bread, jam, and cheese—would often mean the end of the fatigue. In the afternoon the men sat on the fire-step talking, reading, playing cards, or searching for lice in the seams of underclothing; or they slept, usually in one of the small shelters in the parados, but sometimes on the fire-step or even the bottom of the trench. The floors of the shelters were, at this time, a few inches above the level of the stagnant water and ooze of the ditches.

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<sup>16</sup> Sgt. P. R. Paul (No. 4131; 11th Bn.). Railway clerk; of Bunbury, W. Aust.; b. London, 1889. Killed in action, 23 July, 1916.



I look round me (wrote an Australian soldier)<sup>17</sup> at my damp rat-hole, the sides and roof of which are lined with sandbags, which, by the way, are not filled with sand but clay. . . . The lower bags are green with mildew and the upper ones near the sun and air are sprouting grass. Half-way up in the corner a cluster of poisoned mushrooms. . . .

Vermin were not quite so troublesome as at Anzac; but rats constantly ran along the ledges and over and among the sleeping men, in search of food-scrap even in haversacks or pockets. The food of men and officers was almost always brought to them in better condition than in Gallipoli, although during the first months in France some Australian battalions continued the wasteful system often adopted at Anzac, by which each man in the front line cooked for himself. In most units, however, the companies had kitchens immediately in rear of the lines, from which three times a day hot tea and, in the evening, hot meat or stew were carried to the men. The day's meals were sometimes supplemented by cocoa from the Comforts Fund, usually supplied as a hot drink during the night. All cooking in the lines was done with coal or charcoal, in order to avoid creating smoke, which was nevertheless sometimes observable during the day both in the British lines and in the enemy's.

When daylight was fading, so that a man would be barely visible on the other side of No-Man's Land, the real activity of the front began. This hour, when men could still see where they were going but did not offer an easy target, was, except for the corresponding hour at dawn, the most likely time for an enemy attack. It was consequently a standing order on both sides that, as at dawn, the front-line garrison must at dusk stand to arms for an hour with bayonets fixed, looking out over the parapet. Each side, knowing that the other was so assembled, would occasionally "traverse" the opposite breastwork with a sharp sweeping burst of fire from some machine-gun, causing the garrison temporarily to duck their heads behind the sand-bags while the stream of bullets ripped the bagging and occasionally flicked showers of dirt from the parapet on to their helmets.<sup>18</sup> Slightly before the same hour, three miles back in the villages behind the lines,

<sup>17</sup> Pte. D. B. Harford, 51st Bn.

<sup>18</sup> These guns occasionally caught men looking over the parapet, or caused casualties in some party coming over the open fields in rear of the trench area. A machine-gun firing at night was sometimes nicknamed "Parapet Joe."

the transport belonging to the front-line battalions would begin rattling along the roads to the points where the divisional waggons had carted their supplies early the same morning, and would there load up the next day's ration for the forward units and begin drawing it along the roads leading to the front. The distant rattle of iron wheels over the cobblestones on both sides of the line could be heard almost nightly in both the front trenches; but partly by a tacit mutual concession—the advent of food being desirable for both sides—partly because shells thrown at a moving target in the dark would often be wasted, the artillery seldom made any effort to interfere with this traffic. This arrangement or tradition was not binding: about the time of the Australians' arrival German aeroplanes came on several nights flying low over the British lines, dropping parachute flares, which hung lighting a wide area beneath, the evident intention being to discover the movements of transport and then signal to the German artillery. On the British side the newly-formed machine-gun companies were constantly using some of their guns in firing by night upon back areas through which German transport was believed to be moving; according to prisoners captured later, this fire was somewhat dreaded by the enemy.

The material brought up at this hour included not only food supplies and ammunition but also timber and iron for the construction of the trenches, hurdles, wooden frames for revetting the trench-walls, rolls of barbed-wire, and sharpened pickets or iron "cork-screw" posts for the entanglements. Some of the more elaborate of these "engineer stores" came from a factory operated for the Anzac Corps in Hazebrouck by part of the headquarters section of the Australian Mining Battalion.<sup>19</sup> The greater portion, however, came from stores and workshops at divisional headquarters manned by the engineers and by the pioneers who worked as blacksmiths, carpenters, painters, signwriters, armourers, as well as in other trades.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Under Capt. R. V. Morse (of Rockdale and Mosman, N.S.W.).

<sup>20</sup> On a typical day the 6th Field Company, Aust. Engineers, had 12 men issuing and receiving stores at the "R.E. Dump"; 34 unloading barges on the River Lys; 4 exploding shells; 4 surveying a factory; 2 working a pump at Bois Grenier; 4 carrying materials for a pipe-line; 4 repairing a steam-pipe at the divisional baths; 2 repairing an engine at the R.E. dump; one in charge of the "R.E. Store" at the factory; and 9 erecting an observation post.

At the side of some cross-roads in the forward area the regimental transport would deliver its supplies to the battalion quartermaster. From this point a fatigue party took them to the front lines, either carrying them in sandbags through the communication trenches or, if there was a tramway, pushing loaded trucks across the open. On the latter duty men were exposed to the fire of the enemy's machine-guns, which occasionally "traversed" the area. The Germans engaged in similar duty on the tramways behind their lines often suffered in the same way.

In the meantime other and usually larger working parties from the infantry of the reserve brigade had assembled and marched, often several miles, fully armed and carrying picks and shovels, to some road corner beside the open fields, where telephone cables leading to a forward headquarters were to be buried, or to the reserve defence lines in front of which wire-entanglements were to be constructed. A whole system of underground telephone lines was being established throughout the forward area of the Anzac Corps. The cable was laid about five feet deep, unless water prevented, and each man of the working parties was set a definite task, usually to dig three yards of trench. As soon as all had finished digging and the cable had been laid by an officer of the engineers, the trench was refilled and the sods replaced; and, usually about 2.30 a.m., the party was free to begin its return march to its billets. In this way 200 men would lay 600 yards of cable each night. By the end of June, the 1st Division had dug 26,400 yards of cable-trench.

While this nocturnal activity was proceeding throughout the hinterland, in the front line the alertness was far greater than by day. At the end of the hour for the evening "stand-to" the sentries would take their places on the fire-steps, two men keeping guard where by daylight only one had watched. The remaining five or six of the group, in full equipment, sat on the fire-step, or in cold weather crouched round a brazier, talking or dozing, until their own turn of sentry duty came, possibly twice in the night. The sentry's task was to peer into No-Man's Land, endeavouring to discern any movement or signs of enemy action. There had been no recent fighting in the sector. Shortly before the Australians



arrived, it had been planned to send a raiding party into the German trenches with a view to bringing back some prisoners, but the enemy had been found to be prepared and the enterprise was abandoned. On the other hand, the very night before the Australians entered the line, there had suddenly appeared on the parapet of the British trench three Germans, one of whom was forthwith captured, while the other two escaped into the dark behind the British lines, where they were still at large when the Australians took over the line.<sup>21</sup> It was for the first sign either of such enemy patrols, or of raids or more important attacks, that the sentries stood straining their eyes in the dark. In advance of them, in No-Man's Land itself, were maintained two sets of scouts or look-outs: first, close in front of the British wire-entanglement, the listening-posts, usually of three men each, who lay in some shallow shelter straining ears and eyes for a sign of the enemy; second, in advance of these, moving at various hours across the front and sometimes creeping as far as the enemy's wire, the patrols.

It was becoming a tradition of the best units of British infantry that after dusk No-Man's Land was *their* land; that is to say, by bold and active scouting on their own part they endeavoured to make patrolling hazardous, if not impossible, for the enemy. The enemy had precisely the same tradition, and, since a considerable part of his garrison on the Armentières front had been in that sector for over a year, while the British were constantly changing, he possessed a strong local advantage. Nevertheless the troops of the new English divisions had been regularly patrolling. On the night of April 6th, for example, patrols of the 104th Brigade had reached the German wire. On the 9th, while another patrol was examining an old communication trench which ran out from the British lines towards the German—a relic of some forgotten fighting—a bomb had been thrown at it, probably from some German listening-post. For the next few days, while the Australian battalions were taking over the front, their intelligence officers and scouts, being new to the ground

<sup>21</sup> The subsequent death of a British despatch-rider in the back area to the south of that occupied by the Anzac Corps was attributed to these men. The sequel, however, is not recorded in any documents available for this history.



and to their work, undertook little patrolling. In Gallipoli on a good part of the front patrolling had been far too dangerous to be regularly attempted, and the bold scouting on the open flanks had been largely the work of light horse and mounted rifles who were now in Sinai. But the scout platoons newly formed in the infantry included many of the most adventurous and intelligent men in each battalion—a magnificent personnel whose qualities were soon apparent in their achievements. The Australian intelligence officers seem to have been able to rely on their non-commissioned officers to undertake far more of this work than was usually entrusted to N.C.O.'s in most corps; consequently in each battalion sector, practically every night after the first two or three, several patrols, consisting usually of from two to six men under an officer, an N.C.O., or sometimes a private, went out for some time after "stand-down" through one of the numerous sally-ports. These were passages tunnelled beneath the parapet and leading into the "borrow pit" in front of the breastwork. Thence a shallow sap often led forward through or under the straggling wire of the entanglement to a listening-post. All the listening-posts, and all the groups and sentries in the line, were regularly warned of any patrols that were to issue, and of the hours during which they would be out. Consequently, when figures were seen moving in No-Man's Land, the sentries could generally determine whether they were likely to be friend or enemy.

The task of a patrol, after it had passed the scanty British wire, might be to examine some new excavation or mine-crater in No-Man's Land; to discover whether the ditches between the old fields could easily be crossed; to reconnoitre for a route most likely to afford shelter to a prospective raiding party; to find out whether their own or the German wire had been destroyed at some particular point by the artillery; whether it was thin or out of repair; whether the enemy was working under cover of the dark upon his wire or parapet; whether he was sending out frequent or powerful patrols, and what track he adopted; and what was the position of his listening-posts. Later, when it was urgently required to know what German divisions held this part of the line, attempts were nightly made to cut off and capture some of

the enemy scouts in order to ascertain the unit to which they belonged; but normally the patrols were not intended to attack or shoot unless forced to do so—their main object being to keep a watch upon the enemy.

In April the rich grass of the Flemish meadows was rapidly growing; by the beginning of May it was a foot long, and garrisons on both sides had the unpleasant duty of clearing parts of their front by cutting it down. Through this grass the patrols crawled, usually along the old furrows or ditches, observing occasionally against the sky suspicious dark shapes which might prove to be abandoned farm implements, an old stone roller lying in the cover of a field, a willow stump, or a man. Sometimes they met with traces of fighting which dated from the seemingly prehistoric time before the line crystallised into breastworks—a row of long abandoned rifle-pits; a wooden bridge, covered with old brushwood; the dead body of a British soldier in full equipment. In one place was discovered a series of holes which proved to have been caused by the breaking down of the roof of an old tunnel burrowed close beneath the grass-roots by the British infantry. Through it ran a wire attached to a tin outside the British parapet, and the gallery had evidently once enabled a British listening-post to be established on the other side of No-Man's Land, and thus to signal back to the British trenches.

Not infrequently a German patrol was seen; sometimes a figure in a muffler or balaclava cap, bent low and running back swiftly along a ditch towards the German lines, indicating that he too had heard or seen something; sometimes a strong party of a dozen or more stooping men going stealthily across the front. Frequently there could be heard the voices and laughter of some large party working on the enemy's wire, and the hammering of stakes. (Australian scouts noted that their own working parties talked and laughed loudly, their voices being clearly heard on the German side of No-Man's Land.) Such parties were almost always protected by a fringe of riflemen lying farther out, unseen in the grass; but the patrol which located them would, on returning to its own line, report their position to the nearest Lewis or machine-gunners, who would at once fire several

bursts in that direction. It often happened that all further sounds of hammering would thereupon cease, a sign that the working party had been forced to abandon the night's task.

In order to detect patrols or other parties in No-Man's Land, brilliant white flares were frequently sent up from the trenches—a practice almost unknown at Anzac, where such a light thrown by either side would be a matter of comment for days afterwards.<sup>22</sup> Both Germans and British were supplied with flares in the form of large cartridges, to be fired by means of pistols. The missile climbed several hundred feet with a trail like that of a rocket, and then burst into a brilliant white star, which fell gracefully, brilliantly illuminating the area for at least a quarter of a mile around, until the star lay smothered in the grass of No-Man's Land.<sup>23</sup> As soon as a flare burst, trench-walls, tree-stumps, and shrubs instantly flashed up, glaring white against dense black shadows. The rapid descent, however, of the star, and the consequent rising or lengthening of the shadows, made the whole landscape appear to move, and it was not easy to distinguish men from lifeless objects, so long as they stayed perfectly still. Accordingly, whenever men of either side were caught in the light of a flare, they remained motionless until the star had faded. A better illuminant was the small portable electric searchlight often employed by the Germans. These were generally stationed, not in the front trench, but on some position near the support line from which their beam could sweep No-Man's Land. On April 9th a party of the 7th Brigade, working on the wire in front of its trenches, was caught by such a searchlight; its beam found one flank of the party, travelled along the line of men to the other flank, and back again, after which a machine-gun opened upon them. Whether there were casualties on that occasion is not recorded. When a machine-gun opened, the only course possible for the men of such a party was to throw themselves flat at the first shot, and lie prone until fire ceased.

Sometimes an Australian patrol, when venturing near the German wire, could guess by the tinkle of a hand-bell or

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<sup>22</sup> At Helles, however, flares were nightly used, though not constantly as in France.

<sup>23</sup> See *Vol. XII, plates 208, 501.*



by a low whistle that it had been seen by a German listening-post, whose occupants were giving this warning to their friends. Occasionally, however, the first sign was a salvo of bursting stick-bombs.<sup>24</sup> While the Australians were still comparatively new to the work, a small patrol of the 21st Battalion was ambushed by an enemy patrol, which killed one of its members and wounded the two others. The Germans ran back as soon as they had fired, and a heavy fusillade was presently opened from their line. But the wounded Australians and their dead comrade had by then been brought back into the trenches by men of the 21st who went out to help them.<sup>25</sup>

Within a few weeks of the corps entering the line numerous Australian patrols, including many others besides the scouts, were reconnoitring boldly up to the enemy's wire. Lieutenant Gill<sup>26</sup> of the 28th, penetrating into the enemy's wire south-east of Armentières, found a particularly vulnerable point in it; and Captain Foss,<sup>27</sup> crawling out past the old British rifle-pits in the same region, discovered a track by which this spot was "safely" accessible—two discoveries which were subsequently of value.<sup>28</sup> In May, when it was desired to capture a German in order to identify the enemy troops holding this sector, as many as 100 men of the 6th Battalion lay out nightly in No-Man's Land. Lieutenant Wallach<sup>29</sup> of the 19th reported in June that he and his scouts

<sup>24</sup> It was thus that towards the end of May an Australian officer and corporal were captured by the enemy. Lieut. M. B. Dobie (of Melbourne), 1st Pioneer Bn., who with a party of his men had for some weeks been rebuilding the parapet in "Well Farm" salient at the end of "Tin Barn" avenue, walked out into No-Man's Land to view the work from the enemy's side. He presently returned and took out one of his corporals, by name Stephens (of Burwood, N.S.W.), to view it with him. It seemed to Stephens that they were walking dangerously far from the Australian line, when a shower of bombs crashed about them. The corporal was knocked down, and, lying flat, felt out for his officer, whom he presently discovered lying motionless. Stephens, half-dazed, then endeavoured to creep to his own lines, and at length, seeing a parapet ahead of him, crawled over it to find himself in the hands of Germans. These, at his request, brought in his officer, who, however, never regained consciousness.

<sup>25</sup> The leader, Lieut. A. S. Robertson (of Melbourne), was wounded, Cpl. G. F. Saddington (of Collingwood, Vic.) killed by a bullet through the heart, and the remaining man, Pte. W. G. Moyes (of North Melbourne) wounded. Robertson told Moyes to return to the trenches, but the latter refused to leave his dead comrade. On word being sent to the line through a neighbouring listening-post, eight men at once came out and brought in Saddington's body.

<sup>26</sup> Capt. R. H. Gill, M.C.; 28th Bn. Accountant; of Fremantle, W. Aust.; b. Putney, London, 2 Sept., 1883. Killed in action, 28 Sept., 1917.

<sup>27</sup> Capt. C. M. Foss, M.C.; 28th Bn. Farmer; of Babakin district, W. Aust.; b. Arrino, W. Aust., 10 Feb., 1891. Died of wounds, 11 Aug., 1916.

<sup>28</sup> See Chap. ix.

<sup>29</sup> Capt. C. Wallach, M.C.; 19th Bn. Clerk; of Sydney; b. Glebe Point, N.S.W., 12 Nov., 1889. Died of wounds, 22 April, 1918.



now found it possible "to walk out a distance of 200 yards from our trenches with comparative safety." The Australian scouts were by that time constantly on the enemy's wire, investigating his listening-posts.<sup>30</sup> When a man of the 11th was killed close beside the German entanglement, although the enemy sentries were keeping watch on the body with the probable intention of recovering it, one of the battalion scouts, named Cocking,<sup>31</sup> crawled out and tied a rope to its feet, enabling it to be dragged to the Australian line. A scout of the 19th, Lance-Corporal Helms,<sup>32</sup> made his way to a pollarded willow, fifty yards from the German line, climbed it, and stayed there motionless, scanning the enemy's line by the light of the German flares in the endeavour to see what parts of it were garrisoned. On several occasions patrols, after reconnoitring the enemy's wire, flung bombs over his parapet. One sign of the growing confidence of the Australians was that, almost from the first, the Anzac sentries preferred to keep their watch in the dark, as they had done in Gallipoli, throwing no flares. Even when new to the front they used few Very lights, and thereafter throughout the war allowed the German sentries to illuminate No-Man's Land for them. The commander of the 27th (Saxon) Division eventually noted in his diary: "We have Australians against us, daring fellows, who want watching."<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless the German was a stubborn enemy, and throughout the summer his patrols continued to be found at times close to the Australian wire. It was not known to the Australians that he actually made a practice of occasionally sending out scouts to lie near the British wire throughout a whole day. On May 15th, for example, a German officer and N.C.O. spent the day in an Australian listening-post! On June 19th the same officer<sup>34</sup> reconnoitred by day a trench which the Australians were nightly digging in No-Man's Land opposite the Sugar-loaf. Patrolling, however, was undoubtedly becoming more difficult and

<sup>30</sup> They brought back from one a copy of the *Lille War News*.

<sup>31</sup> Previously mentioned in connection with the assault on Leane's Trench, Anzac (Vol. II, p. 493).

<sup>32</sup> Lieut. J. Helms, D.C.M.; 19th Bn. Postal official; of Cloncurry, Q'land; b. Aarhus, Jutland, Denmark, 2 April, 1885. Killed in action, 14 Nov., 1916.

<sup>33</sup> This quotation is from records in the *Reichsarchiv* at Potsdam. The expression in German is: "Verwegene Gesellen, bei denen man auf der Hut sein muss."

<sup>34</sup> Offizierstellvertreter Dietrich, 21st Bavarian R.I.R.

dangerous for the enemy, since, as the summer advanced, his scouts were occasionally cut off and captured,<sup>35</sup> while this hardly ever happened to the Australians. Even this measure of superiority—if, indeed, there was at this time anything to choose between the Australians and their opponents—was not established without loss among the leaders. Lieutenant Cheadle<sup>36</sup> of the 18th Battalion, when boldly scouting with the moon nearing the full, was seen by the enemy, fired on, and fatally wounded as the patrol withdrew over the parapet. A second scout officer of the same brigade, Lieutenant Pye,<sup>37</sup> was similarly killed on May 17th, and Captain Warren<sup>38</sup> of the 9th Battalion on June 18th.

Such were the early experiences of the Anzac troops in the trench-warfare on the Western Front. Naturally, after Gallipoli, the conditions in the back area were stranger to them than those in the fire trenches. To be billeted in the half-ruined Fleurbaix, within two miles of the front line, yet with a remnant of the inhabitants still living among them and selling them eggs, or champagne at five francs a bottle; to step out of the beginning of a communication trench and stroll across a field to "Spy Farm," sheltered by the trees only 800 yards from the line, where the old proprietor and his wife sold them beer as they sat round tables in the farm courtyard; to visit the tea-rooms well kept by a lady of Armentières, or even the comfortably furnished reading or writing huts of the Church Army or Y.M.C.A. near the Saily road; to buy at the army canteens any quantity of groceries, tobacco, or even clothing at prices below those of peace time; to find a French newsboy calling the Paris *Daily Mail* (with special items for Anzac troops) down a country lane within sight of the communication trenches; to be ordered occasionally, as a military fatigue, to help the French people with the work of their farms;<sup>39</sup> to be able, after work, to walk up the road and buy champagne at the nearest

<sup>35</sup> See footnote 2 of Chap. ix.

<sup>36</sup> Lieut. F. B. Cheadle, 18th Bn. Salesman; of Enmore, N.S.W.; b. Wollongong, N.S.W., 7 Nov., 1885. Died of wounds, 12 May, 1916.

<sup>37</sup> Lieut. R. E. Pye, 17th Bn. Grazier; of Sydney; b. 2 April, 1891. Killed in action, 17 May, 1916.

<sup>38</sup> Capt. A. Warren, 9th Bn. School teacher; of Ipswich, Q'land; b. Pittsworth, Q'land, 17 Sept., 1894. Killed in action, 18 June, 1916.

<sup>39</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 433.

*estaminet*<sup>40</sup>—all this meant a wide removal from the joyless conditions of Anzac. Though the reserve battalions and brigades were always drawn upon heavily for working parties—often to the extent of half their active strength—and these nightly fatigues were followed by certain necessary parades and training during the day; though sleep was hardly ever quite sufficient, and often very short; though a certain amount of ceremonial was insisted upon and *cabarets* or other pleasant resorts were apt to be placed out of bounds, and neatness of dress and the saluting of officers were prescribed, even, with modifications, in the trenches—yet the Australian soldier was not prevented by all this from relishing these early days in France. His verdict, in his own language, was: “This will do me.” Nothing could prevent him from showing himself, as he really was, the fresh, gay, modern counter-part of the old Stuart cavalier, enjoying life to the full, always ready to take a chance either for himself or a friend, whether behind the lines or in action, and in both cases with that easy natural manner by which he could invariably be recognised even on the farthest sky-line when advancing against the enemy.

On April 25th a lance-corporal of the 1st Battalion, E. J. S. Belford,<sup>41</sup> writing to his people, said:

It is a lovely day to-day, and the place where we are now is about 500 or 600 yards from the firing line. . . . There is an orchard, so I guess our boys will make short work of the fruit when it gets a bit ripe. If you were here just now you wouldn't know there was a war, everything is so quiet. . . .

Strangely enough, it was in just such quiet surroundings, and about that very time, that the Anzac troops in France first experienced the power of the German artillery. On Anzac Beach enemy shelling had always been expected; but behind the lines at Armentières it was more difficult to remember that the enemy lay within a few miles, part of the distant landscape being within his lines. There was no apparent means by which the enemy could ascertain which houses or other shelters were used as billets or headquarters,

<sup>40</sup> Public house. Even in the area of the forward brigades—though not actually in the trenches—a certain amount of drunkenness at first occurred. The local commanders quickly checked this by getting the French civil authorities to exercise pressure on the inhabitants who sold the drink. Some *estaminets* were closed, with the result that the remaining proprietors became more careful.

<sup>41</sup> L/Cpl. E. J. S. Belford (No. 3255; 1st Bn.). Engine cleaner; of Newcastle, N.S.W.; b. Hamilton, N.S.W., 22 Aug., 1894. Died of wounds, 19 June, 1916.



and some care was taken to keep this information from him. Nevertheless, while the Australians were arriving, and before they actually took over, there had occurred a succession of sharp bombardments in which the enemy had unerringly picked out headquarters and other important points and either damaged or destroyed them. About midday on April 10th "Foray House"—a farm less than a mile from the front, and then used as headquarters of the 16th Royal Scots—was heavily shelled and destroyed. Six officers and 100 men had been in the building when the first two shells arrived; but, recognising that these were ranging shots, the officers cleared their men into the open, and none were hurt. The same night "Two Tree Farm" and a building near it, used as a store for engineer material, were bombarded, and the store burnt. During the following week, in the area of the neighbouring 104th Brigade, which five days later was to be relieved by the 1st Australian Brigade, the headquarters of both front-line battalions were shelled. In the private diary of an Australian it is recorded on April 19th that "within the last few days five houses behind the lines where our own men are billeted have been burnt down with incendiary shells." An officer of the 20th Battalion and also one of the chaplains, who had watched one of these shellings, described the incident as follows. First came a shrapnel burst on the near side of the house—then, thirty seconds later, another on the far side of it—after another thirty seconds "a high-explosive (shell) right into the house to bring it down, followed by an incendiary shell to set it all on fire." Lastly "a couple more high-explosive (shells)—that was all—and there is the result." The diarist adds that he "saw one result—still smoking. No one, so far as I can hear, has been killed in these billets."

If this last statement were true, the immunity was not to continue. When on April 19th the 1st Brigade came into the line, the 9th Battalion<sup>42</sup> took over the billets of the 17th

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<sup>42</sup> The 9th belonged to the 3rd Brigade, but had been lent to the 1st in place of the 3rd Battalion, which had been quarantined at Merris by the Second Army authorities. The reason for this was the discovery of a case of relapsing fever. The 3rd Battalion was separated from the others and held in the back area while the men's clothing was being disinfected in order to kill the lice which spread this infection.



Lancashire Fusiliers in farmhouses and cottages along the lanes about Rouge de Bout, two miles from the line. The surroundings appeared perfectly peaceful, when, shortly after midday on April 20th, the men of one company, billeted in a farmhouse, a barn, a large loft, and three canvas huts in the adjoining field, were surprised by the burst of a shell in the road nearby. Other shells quickly followed, the fourth bursting in the entrance of a hut, and wounding several men. Others ran to help them, and the next shell burst among these. Lieutenant Fothergill<sup>43</sup> was calling the men to shelter, and many were clustering beneath the wall of the house, when the wall was struck and brought down by another shell, killing or injuring nearly fifty. The fire, which was that of a battery of 5.9-inch howitzers, continued for an hour and then ceased. Fothergill and 24 men had been killed, and the medical officer (Captain McKillop)<sup>44</sup> and 48 others wounded. On the same day the 5th Australian Field Battery found shells—apparently from a battery of 4.2-inch howitzers in Fromelles—falling around its gun positions. After firing some sixty shells the enemy ceased, but on the following day the battery position was bombarded with 150 shells, and some of the emplacements were hit. It was thought wise to remove the guns to a new position in a field half-a-mile to the south-west. On April 23rd the enemy shelled Chapel Farm, a little north of Croix Marechal, and also blew up an old ammunition store a little south of that point; on the 25th he fired 170 shells at "M.O. House," near Fleurbaix, fortunately on this occasion without hitting it; on the same day he put nearly 200 projectiles into "Cushy Farm," a billet of the 17th Battalion; and on the 26th flung a number of shells at three separate times into Barlette Farm, occupied by the 1st Machine Gun Company. On the 27th he shelled Erquinghem, one burst killing an Australian soldier and three French children and wounding five other children—"most of them," as the neighbouring field ambulance reported, "severely." On the 30th he again shelled Barlette Farm, one shell bringing down half the house. But by this time

<sup>43</sup> Lieut. A. E. Fothergill, 9th Bn. School teacher; of Grafton and Muswellbrook, N.S.W.; b. Bristol, Eng., 2 March, 1886. Killed in action, 20 April, 1916.

<sup>44</sup> Major A. McKillop, D.S.O.; A.A.M.C. Medical practitioner; of Temora, N.S.W.; b. Goulburn, N.S.W., 29 June, 1883.

men and officers had learned that safety was to be found in the open fields. On their own initiative the section commanders and some of the men, with the shells falling round them, rescued their machine-guns, and then ran out and lay in the fields or lined the ditches, where they escaped almost without a casualty.<sup>45</sup>

The certainty with which the apparently invisible enemy picked out these and other occupied houses and gun-positions, the accuracy and suddenness of his bombardments, and the persistence with which he often continued them, if necessary day after day, until the target was a smoking ruin, made a deep impression. These blows seemed at the time almost supernatural, and the units which suffered by them were subjected to heavy nervous strain, with the almost invariable consequence that they began to suspect the agency of spies. The civil inhabitants were Flemish, allied in blood to those of Belgian Flanders, whose sympathy the Germans had attempted to win over, not always without success. It was known that the enemy had agents among the prostitutes, commercial travellers, and others in the towns and villages in the more rearward areas, and troops had been warned that careless statements let drop among the villagers might reach these persons. Many precautions were being taken against espionage: for greater secrecy the transport waggons of each division or other formation were marked, not, as previously, with the name of the formation, but with a sign; in the case of the Australian divisions it was with a rising sun, with the number of the division near its centre (as shown in the margin). So convinced did the troops now become of the existence of an elaborate system of espionage among the



*Sign of 2nd Australian Division*

<sup>45</sup> Only once or twice afterwards during the war did the A.I.F. suffer, through shelling of billets, casualties approaching those of the 9th Battalion at Rouge de Bout.

cottagers, that the absurdity of most of the "spy stories" which flooded the corps for a month or so was not at first evident even to the staff. After the shelling of the 5th Battery above narrated the diary of the General Staff, 1st Australian Division, notes:

There is more than a suspicion that the position of the battery was disclosed by an agent. A number of farms up to within 500-600 yards of the enemy firing line are still occupied, and the owners work in the fields behind the trenches and around the gun positions. A peasant was arrested in the vicinity of the 5th Battery, as his movements were considered suspicious, but was subsequently released, as the man was known to the local police, who vouched for his *bona fides*. It transpired that the man's own house had been demolished during the bombardment.

One battery whose position was shelled observed that a farmer had been working in a neighbouring field, with a white horse in his plough-team. The gunners, after enduring this for a day, visited the farmer's stable and stained the horse brown with a wash of permanganate of potash. The infantry also looked with suspicious eyes on any farmers engaged in ploughing. On April 26th Lieutenant-Colonel Wisdom of the 18th Battalion wrote:

Our attention has also been drawn to the movements of a team of sometimes one, sometimes two, horses working in a field opposite Canteen Farm. It has been noticed that during shelling these horses have been manœuvred in a peculiar and suspicious manner, as though working in connection with artillery observers. . . .

On April 19th, when one battalion was relieving another, lights were reported to have been seen "at the ruined tower in Bois Grenier." Upon this report spreading, lights were constantly "seen" in that direction; on the following night they were thought to be answering other lights in the enemy lines. The neighbouring battalion suspected "systems of an elaborate nature between civilians within our lines and enemy observers." In the 7th Brigade a sniper observed a flash (which he took to be that of a heliograph) near Wez Macquart church behind the German lines, "and what appeared to be an answering signal from a spire in Armentières." Many of these reports were at once closely investigated, and in every case the suspicions were found to be baseless. One light in an Armentières church-tower was indeed definitely tracked down by members of the staff. Perched high up in the huge dusty timbers of the spire,



vaguely illuminated by a flickering candle or lantern, were found an N.C.O. and a man of one of the Second Army survey sections, whose nightly duty was to keep watch from an opening in the steeple in the endeavour to locate the flashes of German guns. In Bois Grenier the scouts of the 18th Battalion, though they spent several nights in observation, could find no trace of the reported lights in the ruins. The Anzac troops were certainly not wanting in a sense of humour, and it is real evidence of the strain on men and officers that the "peculiar and suspicious manner" in which the sturdy agriculturist manœuvred his horses "during shelling" was not attributed by eyewitnesses to the same natural causes which probably induced the farmer of Fleurbaix to "act in a suspicious manner" while a German bombardment was blowing up his house.

By the end of April the more intelligent were recognising that the information as to which houses were crowded with troops was being given to the enemy not by spies but by the actions of the troops themselves, which must be visible to the enemy's artillery and other observers. The men began to realise that a large part of the back area was under the most careful observation. There is little doubt that, in spite of official warnings and orders, they had been careless on first coming into reserve billets, showing themselves around the houses or on the open roads, lighting fires, even hanging out their blankets on the side of the buildings nearest to the enemy. As an eyewitness wrote:

I think the real cause (of the shelling of billets) is that they do not realise that all this country has eyes. Through the trees you can see a ridge,<sup>46</sup> only about one or one and a half miles away. That ridge belongs to the Germans—they have all the high ground. The men do not realise that . . . there are eyes in the distant trees, and telescopes, too, probably. They are being watched here as never have they been watched in their lives before. And if the enemy sees movement about a house there goes down on his map a cross against it (he has almost every tree mapped); and the next fine day that house is on the list for shelling—as part of the normal procedure.

The fact was that the troops in and behind the British lines (and equally those behind the German) were subjected to the whole system of intelligence by which the daily impressions of numerous observers were transmitted to lower

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<sup>46</sup> The Fromelles-Aubers ridge.



and higher staffs for collation, to be followed by action, sometimes almost as automatic as the reactions of a living body. Every fine day the lower margin of sky in rear of the Germans was dotted with stationary balloons, in shape much like fat garden grubs, from which observers brooded all day over the distant landscape. The British intelligence system was probably as elaborate and efficient, but the Royal Flying Corps had not yet fully developed the balloon service, and for some time no balloon was sent up in the Anzac area. On the German side there were visible on certain days as many as seven. It became recognised that if a balloon could be seen from any road leading towards the front, it was inadvisable for a staff officer's car to use the road or for a party of men to move along it. The danger was not to the passing car, since the place might not be shelled till next day, but to the troops who normally used the road or were billeted beside it. Men in "close billets"—that is, houses near the line—had to be kept indoors during the bright hours, no matter how tempting the weather. Batteries, in order to avoid observation, as far as possible refrained from shooting when an enemy balloon was within sight of the gun-positions. On May 22nd a gun of the 10th Battery, which was firing from a cellar, continued in spite of a warning that a balloon was "up." That afternoon the Germans began to shell the position—first with single shells until they hit the building, and then with salvo after salvo of 5.9-inch shell until they had destroyed both house and gun.

The German artillery was employed with a methodical persistence which would have been impossible for the Turkish gunners at Anzac even had they possessed the inclination. When once the German found an important target, his object was to shell it until it was destroyed; if it was not blown up by one day's bombardment, he returned to it on the next. When the 1st Australian Division was moving into the front line, the enemy discovered, probably by the flash of telescopes injudiciously used by reconnoitring visitors, two British observation posts in a hedge or ruins near La Boutillerie, 400 yards behind the line. These posts were accordingly shelled on April 19th, on which day one of them was blown up. On the 20th the German guns opened again upon the other,

and after three separate bombardments entirely destroyed it. This very persistence, however, carried one constant advantage for those who were fired at. So consistent was the German that, if he was shelling, say, a particular trench-junction or cross-roads, it was possible to assume almost with certainty that the shells would continue to fall regularly and accurately upon that one target, and single passengers or parties of men could avoid casualties by simply walking round the shell-bursts as they would round a stationary obstacle.

The Armentières sector continued, until the beginning of June, to be very quiet, probably the least disturbed on the British front. The casualties of the I Anzac Corps were at this time much lower than those of any corps in the Second Army. In the last week of April, for example, I Anzac had 118 killed and wounded, as against some 500 for the II Corps, which was next in the line, while the figures for the other corps were somewhat higher. During the next two weeks the Anzac losses were 231 and 97 respectively. These tranquil months fortunately gave the commander and staff of the A.I.F. time not only for some training of the troops, but also for the very important task of establishing the system of organisation and control which was to endure until the force eventually returned to Australia, and upon which its efficiency both directly and indirectly depended.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE NEW BASE

ON the first arrival in France of the leading portion of the A.I.F. there was much vagueness as to what authority was to control it. G.H.Q. in France had no information on the point, and Robertson at the War Office very little. The problem had, in fact, not been definitely settled. Three solutions had at various times been proposed.

It will be remembered that General Bridges, before leaving Australia with the first contingent, was given powers amounting to those of an administrative commander-in-chief of the A.I.F.,<sup>1</sup> and that, after his death, these were eventually delegated to Birdwood *as commander of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps*.<sup>2</sup> The appointment of Birdwood by name was, on the recommendation of Colonel Dodds, then Adjutant-General, deliberately withheld, it being urged that inconvenience might be caused at some later date if Australian troops outside his army corps were administered by him. But at the front it was not realised that any such qualification had been intended, and, as long as he commanded the army corps, Birdwood acted as the full successor to Bridges, exercising even more control than Bridges had done over the affairs of the base. In consequence, however, of the difficulty of communicating between Cairo and Anzac close control was impossible, though Colonel Sellheim at Cairo considered himself to be Birdwood's representative.

While that campaign was still in progress, complaints concerning the training dépôt had reached the Minister for Defence in Melbourne. Upon the matter being referred back to Sellheim, the latter had pointed out that he had no control over the training and discipline of the reinforcements, which—by the decision of Kitchener and with the acquiescence of Bridges—had been entrusted entirely to a British officer, Major-General Spens, who was under Maxwell's command, and not Birdwood's.

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<sup>1</sup> As laid down in the (Australian) Order in Council; see footnote in Vol. II, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. II, pp. 417, 418 and note.

It appeared to the Minister for Defence that Sellheim's attitude, as inferred from his answer, was that the Australian Government was without influence over the administration of its own troops—the very result which the Australian base in Cairo had been created to avoid. Colonel Dodds—always the foremost advocate of the principle that Australian troops should be commanded by Australian officers—pointed out that Sellheim's powers were circumscribed, and suggested that they should be increased in order to include not only control over training but the definite command of all Australians in Egypt. Furthermore, inasmuch as there would shortly be some 40,000 Australians under this command, Dodds recommended that a strong staff also should be provided, with general staff, quartermaster-general's, adjutant-general's, and medical branches. After consultation with General M'Cay, then acting as Inspector-General, the Minister approved of most of these suggestions, and, on November 17th, the British Ministry was informed, without further preliminary, that the Australian Government proposed to appoint an Australian officer to command its troops in Egypt; that he would be given a suitable staff, and would be responsible to the Australian Government for "the co-ordination of training, administration, and organisation." While it was expressly stated that this officer was to be under Sir John Maxwell, the intention of the Commonwealth to take over the training of its own troops was thus quite definitely indicated.

It appears possible that, if the Gallipoli campaign had continued longer, this important measure might eventually have resulted in a division of the control of the A.I.F. between two commanders—Birdwood retaining the fighting command at the front, and the control of administration passing to the officer in charge of the base. For the latter position the Minister chose Brigadier-General Irving, an officer whom he judged to be capable, determined, and probably more assertive than Sellheim. He was allotted a staff of great strength. To remedy reported abuses in the contract and supply system, to set up a canteen system, which the British had failed to establish in Gallipoli, and to infuse strict "business principles" into the Australian base, there was to be sent, as Deputy-Quartermaster-General, an Australian business man of high



capacity—Robert Murray McCheyne Anderson of Sydney—to whom was given for the purpose the rank of colonel. In order to straighten out the medical tangle described in a previous volume,<sup>3</sup> Colonel Howse was to join the staff in Egypt as Director of Medical Services; Sellheim was to act as Deputy-Adjutant-General; a general staff officer would be appointed later.

In allotting for this duty a determined officer with a staff of outstanding strength, the Australian Government was adopting the only possible course if it really desired to take over, in the absence of Birdwood, the immensely important function of training the Australian troops. Neither Maxwell nor his successor Murray could have handed over that function to a weak staff. But this attempt of the Australian Government to solve the difficult problem of controlling the A.I.F. without consulting those in responsibility at the front miscarried. Before Irving reached Egypt the situation had been completely altered by the evacuation of Gallipoli, and the return of Birdwood, Godley, and the divisions from Anzac. At Anzac Godley, on succeeding Birdwood in the command of the A. & N.Z. Army Corps, had automatically assumed that of the A.I.F. But when they returned to Egypt, Godley, though still commanding the army corps, recognised Birdwood's claim to resume control of the A.I.F., and for the next two months the matter was settled by the recommendation of Murray—concurred in by the dominion governments—that Birdwood should temporarily command the "A. & N.Z. Forces" in order to carry out the reorganisation of the divisions.

Irving, whose appointment had now necessarily been altered by the Australian Government to that of "General Officer Commanding Australian details and reinforcements in Egypt,"<sup>4</sup> arrived while these events were in progress. He was at once impressed by the general feeling that Sellheim had done far better than was recognised in Australia. Maxwell, Birdwood, and Godley were acutely conscious of

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<sup>3</sup> *Vol. II, pp. 399-410.*

<sup>4</sup> His original appointment (made before the Evacuation) was that of "General Officer Commanding Australian Troops in Egypt." This would now have given him command of all Birdwood's troops, as well as of the base and training dépôt.

the hardship of superseding him by Irving, who was actually his junior. Irving wrote to the Secretary for Defence—

All the generals above-mentioned have spoken to me very earnestly about the manner in which Colonel Sellheim carried out his very arduous duties. General Birdwood informed me that he had already recommended Sellheim for promotion, and would do so again; and from all I have heard and seen I would respectfully strongly recommend same.

Colonel Anderson, the new D.Q.M.G., also wrote to the Minister:

I feel . . . that injustice has been unwittingly done to Sellheim. I do not for a moment say that alterations and improvements could not be made here . . . but remember that Sellheim took hold of this thing when it was in absolute chaos, and he had to build it up himself from nothing with very poor assistance, as all the best men were wanted with the divisions, brigades, and battalions. A great work has been done, and under most discouraging and disadvantageous circumstances.

On arrival in Egypt Irving had been given by Maxwell the vague appointment of "Commandant, A.I.F. Forces," which in reality carried with it no duties. The training dépôt, which formed the main part of his nominal command, was at this moment being depleted of most of its troops for the new divisions, and Birdwood was convinced that, by the time they had been formed, the dépôt would be a comparatively small affair. He accordingly offered Irving the command of the 14th Infantry Brigade. This was accepted, and Sellheim on February 21st resumed full control of the Australian base. His organisation had lately been separated by Maxwell from that of the New Zealanders,<sup>5</sup> two distinct offices being established, known as "A.I.F. Headquarters" and "N.Z.E.F. Headquarters," of which Sellheim commanded the former.

If Birdwood—as was hoped and intended when he was given temporary command of the "Australian and New Zealand Forces"—had become commander of an A. & N.Z. army, with Godley as head of one of his two corps, his administrative control would possibly have continued unquestioned, even when his army moved to the front. But when the reorganisation ended and the proposal to form an army was deferred, and when the first three divisions<sup>6</sup> were suddenly

<sup>5</sup> See Vol. II, p. 417 (footnote 57).

<sup>6</sup> 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions and New Zealand Division.

ordered to France, a definite decision was urgently required. Unless suitable action were taken, Birdwood, who was now reverting to the active command of a corps, but remained clothed with the administrative command of the A.I.F., would have to administer through a headquarters in Cairo, not only his own corps at the front in France, but the light horse and Australian troops of Godley's corps in Egypt, the reinforcements and convalescents at Zeitoun, and the hospitals and other A.I.F. units at the base or on lines of communication in France, Egypt, and England. He therefore, on March 5th, drafted a memorandum addressed to General Murray, asking that the whole question of the administration of the Australian and New Zealand forces should now be settled by the War Office, and recommending that, when the troops of those dominions moved to France, their respective headquarters should be transferred from Cairo to London, the control, however, remaining, as during the Gallipoli campaign, with the general commanding them in the field. As part of the troops would be left in Egypt, a branch headquarters would be established there.

The War Office are probably unaware that the organisation and strength of the dominion forces necessitate their administration as a whole. The separation of the troops involves great difficulties in this; but I fear the dominion governments will be greatly disappointed if we do not make an effort to fulfil their wishes in this respect. The necessary statutory powers are held by me, both to command and to administer.<sup>7</sup> With separated forces I shall have great difficulty in exercising these powers; but I propose, by a delegation of such powers, and the establishment of a headquarters or principal base in England, to endeavour to secure homogeneity, organisation, and uniformity of administration.

Murray, though not closely acquainted with the problem, had now sufficient experience to realise that some special organisation for administration of the forces of each dominion was necessary. On March 6th—before Birdwood's proposal

<sup>7</sup> In making this statement (which was presumably drafted by White) Birdwood might appear to have been claiming authority—which he did not possess—over the New Zealand, as well as the Australian, force. He seems—though this is not made clear—to have really intended to continue the arrangement then existing, Godley continuing to administer the N.Z.E.F., and himself the A.I.F., as in Gallipoli. Godley, in commenting on Murray's scheme, forwarded to him by Birdwood, pointed out in definite terms that the command of the New Zealand force was vested in himself.

reached him—no order having yet been received that even an army corps staff should accompany the divisions, he telegraphed:

In view of the peculiar organisation of the Australians and relationships with the dominions, I personally consider a corps staff necessary, in whatever manner it may be decided to employ the three divisions.

At the same time—apparently before receiving Birdwood's suggestions—Murray's staff drafted for submission to the War Office a scheme for the control of the Anzac forces undoubtedly more logical and probably, apart from personal considerations, much more workable than that proposed in Birdwood's memorandum. The headquarters, they suggested, must move to London; but the two duties of active command at the front and administrative control through the base could not, they represented, be efficiently discharged by the same officer. Therefore, either Birdwood should continue to command one of the Anzac corps in the field and another officer be appointed to administer the Anzac forces from the base, or, alternatively, Birdwood should go to London to control the administration, and hand over to another his field command.

This scheme, however, ignored one fact—the great influence which General Birdwood had obtained over the public opinion of the Australian people—an influence which he would undoubtedly lose if he ceased to command their troops in the field. That influence General White—the author and chief upholder of the existing scheme of control—was determined to exert and sustain to the utmost, seeing in it an almost heaven-sent means of maintaining single-minded control of the A.I.F. by a leader and staff devoted to its service, and at the same time an elastic connection with the British Army. White from the first had recognised to the full the difficulty which any commander at the front must experience in administering the whole personnel of a national force. In discussions in Egypt he fully admitted the defectiveness of a system which would place upon Birdwood the responsibilities of a War Office as well as of an active commander—the duties, as it were, not only of a Haig but of a Robertson. Nevertheless he deliberately accepted that defect in order to gain an advantage which, he believed, enormously outweighed it,



namely, almost complete freedom from political control. White saw that Birdwood's prestige, as the fighting commander of the troops, was so great in Australia that, so long as he controlled the A.I.F., his authority would not be questioned or suffer interference. The administration of the whole force, the promotion of officers, and the conferring of appointments, would be carried on by the machinery of the A.I.F. devised for one object only—that of bringing to the front the most efficient men, and producing the most effective force. This practice by no means prevailed in all armies; there had, indeed, been heard bitter reports of the existence in the Canadian force of difficulties which were attributed to political interference. White believed that, with the assistance of a capable administrative staff situated in London, Birdwood at the front could control the A.I.F. with the exception of the Egyptian portion, which would be administered by his delegate—Godley or Chauvel—with a somewhat similar office in Cairo.

Birdwood and Godley, to whom Murray submitted his draft scheme, both strongly objected to it. Murray was entirely unconvinced by their representations;<sup>8</sup> but on March 14th a new solution happened to be proposed in a cable to himself from General Robertson in London, who suggested:

You may think Birdwood's departure affords a suitable opportunity for your taking control and dealing with the Australian and New Zealand Governments, thus leaving Godley merely as a corps commander. This would seem far preferable.

To Murray the arrangement suggested by Robertson meant that the Anzac reinforcements and convalescents—amounting to 20,000 at least, and often more—would be left under his command in Egypt; not only would drafts from Australia continue to be sent to Egypt, but convalescents from France and England would be sent thither before rejoining their divisions in France. As this pool of men would be available at any time to meet a Turkish invasion, Murray welcomed the

<sup>8</sup> The proposal eventually made by Birdwood was that he, through Godley (advised by M'Cay), should control the A.I.F. in Egypt, while Godley, through General Russell, controlled the N.Z.E.F. in England and France. Murray's view is stated in a letter of March 16 to Birdwood: "It would seem to be clear that you cannot perform your duties as a Corps Commander in France and deal with the many questions which will arise affecting the Australians in Egypt and the reinforcements of your Corps in France." He wished to keep White in Egypt, to advise him on these matters. Godley pointed out that the New Zealand headquarters had been separated from the Australian, and that New Zealand would not agree to re-amalgamate them.

proposal; but, on questioning Birdwood and Godley, he found them opposed to it. The arrangement indeed could not prove workable for two reasons: first—though neither Murray nor Robertson recognised the fact—the force of each dominion required a commander responsible to the dominion government, and ready to give his whole attention to its interests; second, a system of feeding units in France by drafts from an Egyptian base must have broken down under any strain.

The commanders of the dominion forces were thus at variance with Murray, and, as they could not agree, the decision must lie between the War Office and the dominion governments; as, however, these governments had given the commanders of their forces ample powers of action, White urged upon Birdwood that he and Godley should act firmly and ask the dominion governments to support them. Birdwood accordingly, in a memorandum to Murray, set forth plainly his and Godley's schemes for the control of their forces, which, they informed Murray, they were recommending the governments of the two dominions to sanction. The proposals involved the transfer of the headquarters of both forces to London and the delegation by Birdwood and Godley of certain powers to representatives, through whom they would control those parts of their respective forces which were separated from them. Birdwood, who acted throughout with Godley's concurrence, attached copies of the cable-messages which he proposed to transmit to Australia and New Zealand, asking the dominion governments, if they supported the proposals, to so notify their respective High Commissioners in London and the British War Office.

Murray could have acted on Robertson's suggestion, refused to send these cablegrams—or sent them with a strong covering despatch—and forthwith taken control of the two forces. He chose, however, the wise course of referring the decision, as Birdwood had done, to the War Office and the dominion governments, and very generously gave Birdwood and White leave to visit London on their way to the front in order to lay their views personally before the War Office, though he felt sure that their influence would be fatal to his plan. The correctness of White's judgment on one point—Birdwood's influence in Australia—had within the last fortnight been to some extent put to the test (although neither he nor Birdwood

was aware of the fact) in the course of communications which had passed between Murray and Robertson as to which leader, Godley or Birdwood, should accompany the first three divisions to France. Unless it was otherwise ordered, Godley, then commanding the I Anzac Corps, would have gone with that formation. Robertson, however, telegraphed that the Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, who was then in England, had expressed a strong desire that Birdwood and not Godley should be sent. Murray had at once telegraphed:

Godley has done splendidly with the A. & N.Z. Army Corps, and his alleged unpopularity may be due to the fact that he has very strict ideas of discipline, which (is) much needed. . . .

Robertson, however, after further consultation with Hughes, had replied:

It is essential that the Corps should be given every chance to make a good beginning in France, and therefore the Secretary of State and I have decided that Birdwood must go.

Undoubtedly Birdwood hoped that, by proceeding to London, he would be able to lay the case personally before his old chief and intimate friend, Lord Kitchener, and the Australian Prime Minister. At Marseilles, however, the A.I.F. came under an authority, almost as powerful as the Imperial Government itself—G.H.Q.—which was not aware of any need for Birdwood's visit to London, and which required him to control in France his newly-arrived corps. He and White were accordingly ordered to Haig's headquarters, where Birdwood, on stating his case, was informed that they would be allowed to visit London only if General Plumer, the commander of the Second Army, could spare them. It was clear that the Commander-in-Chief did not, as yet, recognise the right and need of self-government in the administration of the Australian force, and White was therefore of opinion that a full and frank, though courteous, statement of the Australian view should be drawn up and laid before Haig at the very beginning of their dealings with him. Birdwood, however, was opposed to this course. Leave to visit London was asked of Plumer, who intimated that he could spare either the corps commander or the chief-of-staff, but not both of them at the same time. Birdwood was thus reluctantly forced to proceed to London without White.



There can be little doubt that, if this matter had arisen before Robertson became Chief of Staff, it would have been practically determined in personal correspondence between Birdwood and Kitchener. Under the new—and unquestionably more efficient—régime, it was settled at two conferences on April 21st and 28th, at which General Birdwood and Andrew Fisher (the Australian High Commissioner), together with representatives of New Zealand, met the British Adjutant-General and certain other high departmental officials of the War Office. As the two High Commissioners and the military representatives of the dominions in London, reinforced by Birdwood's opinion, were strongly in favour of the transfer, and the Australian Government had telegraphed supporting that course, the representatives of the War Office did not in any way resist it. The British Government had, however, at an early stage of the war, most generously undertaken that any accommodation—except billeting—required by Australian and New Zealand forces should be provided free of charge, the British authorities assuming that responsibility.<sup>9</sup> The Australian and New Zealand bases and training dépôts would probably comprise from 40,000 to 50,000 troops, and huts were scarce, except at Salisbury Plain. The British representatives at the conference therefore undertook to move a British division out of the Salisbury area, and otherwise to make the same provision for Australian and New Zealand troops as for their own. They only asked that, if Australia pressed for this transfer, the blame for any unavoidable shortage of huts in the winter-time should not fall upon the War Office—as had occurred in the case of the Canadians.

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<sup>9</sup> General Bridges, shortly after his arrival in Egypt, had been furnished with a copy of a letter dated 10 Dec., 1914, from the War Office to General Maxwell, containing the following:—

“ . . . the Commonwealth and Dominion Governments have undertaken complete financial responsibility for their contingents, but it has been decided that recovery shall be made only in respect of services by the Imperial Government which can readily be put down to the account of the contingents. . . .

“ No charge will be made for—

- (a) Accommodation (either capital cost or rent) other than the cost of billeting.
- (b) Barrack and hospital stores.
- (c) The cost of land or inland-water travelling after disembarkation in Egypt.”

This arrangement, most generous to the Dominions, was held to cover the cost of providing and furnishing offices, camps, and barracks and, in England, of billeting. For treatment in hospital a daily charge of 2s. per head was made. Billeting in France was included in the capitation charge.



Andrew Fisher answered that the Commonwealth Government "would make no complaint if the War Office would help them in the best way to win the war." It was also decided that sick and wounded should be sent to England, and retained there if likely to be fit in six months. If unlikely to be fit in that time, they should be sent back to Australia. The British officials again put in a warning that this was contrary to the expressed wish of the Australian Government, which had previously asked that its sick should not be sent to England, but, if unlikely to be fit in three months, should be returned to Australia. But the proposed change was obviously so reasonable that Fisher provisionally accepted it and recommended it to his Government. The British officials furthermore made clear that, to avoid possible confusion, they could in future treat only with one London representative of each dominion—either with the official in charge of the dominion's military headquarters or with the High Commissioner, but not with both. It was accordingly arranged that dealings should be, not—as heretofore—with the High Commissioner, but with the head of the dominion's military headquarters in London, who, if necessary, could keep his High Commissioner informed. As long as there was an Australian force in Egypt, it was to be represented by a similar official and a branch office in Cairo.

The question whether the dominion's chief military representative in London should be a dominion minister, or the commander-in-chief (if any) of its force, or an officer representing either of them, was naturally left to the dominion itself to decide. The Australian Government adopted as a matter of course Birdwood's suggestion—of which White was really the author—that the official in London should be the representative of Birdwood, who was thus actually, though not yet formally, confirmed in administrative command of the A.I.F. It remained to convince Sir Douglas Haig in France. This was done by W. M. Hughes, who at the end of May visited G.H.Q. and discussed the matter with the Commander-in-Chief, at the same time impressing upon him very strongly the desire of the Australian Government that the Anzac troops "should be regarded as an army and that General Birdwood should command it." Birdwood's proposal for the formation of an Australian and New Zealand

army had already been supported by the Commonwealth in a telegram to the British Government, urging that this step would gratify Australian aspirations and stimulate recruiting; but the War Office had on April 2nd replied as follows:

As you will understand, it is not possible to predict now what measures the military situation may demand by the time the two divisions in Egypt become ready to take the field and the third division reaches the Mediterranean, but every effort will be made to meet your wishes regarding formation of an Australian (*sic*) army as soon as circumstances permit; and this has always been our intention.

The New Zealand Government might not have agreed to the inclusion of its division with those of Australia; but a month after the receipt of the above reply the Australian Government made an offer to raise and despatch to England within five months a sixth Australian division.<sup>10</sup> It added—

This offer may cause difficulty (in) supplying total reinforcements after December, but this, if grave, can be overcome by utilizing this division as reinforcements.

This proposal, though thankfully acknowledged, was rejected by the Army Council, which was "strongly of opinion" that a sixth division should not be formed unless it could be guaranteed that reinforcements for all six would be "forthcoming as and when required": an answer which appears reasonable, but which the Army Council five months later, in circumstances involving the utmost embarrassment for Australia, diametrically reversed.

The offer of a sixth division had thus been refused when W. M. Hughes urged his request upon the Commander-in-Chief. Sir Douglas Haig informed him that the strength of the Australian and New Zealand force in France was not sufficient for an army; and that, "as matters stood," he could not even place all the Australian divisions under Birdwood's tactical control—which Hughes desired—without hampering the general plan of campaign. He would, however, agree to Birdwood's having the full administrative command;<sup>11</sup> "and

<sup>10</sup> The suggestion came from the Chief of the General Staff in Melbourne, Colonel H. Foster. There is nothing in the records to show that the intention was to provide sufficient divisions to enable an Australian army to be formed, but when Birdwood learned of the offer he certainly associated the two projects, as, probably, did W. M. Hughes. The War Office asked for secrecy as to the number of divisions raised.

<sup>11</sup> In addition to making and regulating promotions and appointments under the Australian Order in Council of 15 Sept., 1915 (see Vol. II, pp. 417-8), Birdwood was allowed by Haig to transfer individual officers or men from England to France and *vice versa* without reference to G.H.Q. He must not, however, interfere with the transfer of reinforcements or of the sick and wounded.

if at any future time I can see my way to employing all the Australian forces together under his command for some special operation, I will gladly do so."<sup>12</sup>

With this reply one of the great problems of the A.I.F.—that of its administrative command—was finally and satisfactorily settled. But the proposal which would have welded it into a single fighting force—by the formation of an Anzac or Australian army—fell to the ground. It is probably true that the forming of an actual army was impracticable—the combining of the Anzac divisions in a solid block might, in 1916, have involved difficulties too great to be prudently encountered; certainly such a policy would have interfered with the plan of that year's fighting. Haig's promise to employ Australians, where possible, together was fairly well kept, though the advantage of this was not yet realised. To the British staff, as a whole, there seemed no more reason for combining Australian divisions than for combining those

<sup>12</sup> These negotiations are partly contained in correspondence which followed the first discussion at G.H.Q. On June 16 Hughes wrote to Haig: "What I . . . urged was that the Anzacs should be regarded as an Army, and that General Birdwood should command it. You, however, stated that the number of Australasian soldiers fell short of what was necessary for an Army, and that it would therefore disarrange your plans to treat them as such. Although regretting very much that you took this view . . . I at once forebore to press the matter further, but asked only that General Birdwood should have command over all the Australian troops in France, though, of course, acting under General Plumer. To this you assented. The question of administration was then discussed, and I asked that General Birdwood should continue to act . . . as he had done in Gallipoli. Although you expressed some doubt as to whether this was practicable, you were not opposed to it. I now learn that it is intended to place Brig-General (sic) Godley in charge of the two divisions that are shortly to arrive (or have arrived), so that thus General Birdwood will only have charge of part of the Australasian troops, and not all."

"I hope this will not be done. The Australian Government desire that its troops in France should be placed directly under General Birdwood. And further we desire that he shall continue the work of administration of *all* our troops outside Australia and Great Britain. . . ."

Haig replied: "I desire to do all that I can to meet the wishes of the Australian Government as regards the command and administration of the Australian Forces serving in France, subject of course to the fundamental principle that nothing must be done which would hamper the Imperial Forces in attaining the object for which the Empire is fighting." After agreeing (as far as was within his province) to the appointment of Birdwood to the administrative command of the A.I.F., he proceeds: "For the reasons I have already explained to you, I cannot form an Australian army now, nor can I place all the Australian Forces in France under General Birdwood's command, in the full military sense of the term, as matters stand. I will bear the wishes of the Australian Government in mind, however, and if at any future time I can see my way to employing all the Australian Forces together under his command for some special operation, I will gladly do so."

"I have discussed the whole problem with General Birdwood, who fully understands and agrees in the arrangements I propose to make, and I can assure you that I will give effect to the wishes of the Australian Government to the fullest extent that I can, with due regard to the primary object which they, in common with the rest of the Empire, have in view."

Birdwood wrote to Lieut.-Gen. Sir L. E. Kiggell (C.G.S. to Haig) on June 23 agreeing with Haig's reply, but adding: "We may, as I mentioned yesterday, expect still another division from Australia in due course, and there is a mounted division in Egypt." This was after the War Office had refused the offer of a sixth division.



from London or Lancashire. It was not until the end of 1917, and then only on strong pressure from Australia, that the Australian infantry divisions were actually combined. Yet great advantage did lie in this policy; and, through lack of imagination, there was undoubtedly lost to the Allied commanders, until the later stages of war, that access of confidence and enthusiasm which first inspired the Anzac troops when, in the Battle of Broodseinde on the 4th of October, 1917, four Anzac divisions first fought together in line.

The administrative self-government of the A.I.F. had, however, been established. An Australian military headquarters, with a fairly efficient system and personnel, had already been set up in London by the High Commissioner, who had been forced by the sheer course of events in 1915 to take this step. Even before the Landing, Surgeon-General Williams had induced the High Commissioner to ask the War Office to concur in the establishment of a *dépôt* somewhere in England, to which Australian troops could be sent when discharged from hospitals in England. The matter had not, however, been settled when, after the fighting at Helles on May 8th, numbers of Australian wounded began to arrive at English hospitals. It was clear that, unless steps were taken at once, many of these troops would presently be discharged convalescent without any recognised *dépôt* to which to report. Australian convalescents had already begun to find their way to the High Commissioner's office, then a line of dingy rented houses in Victoria-street, Westminster, and even to congregate in the London streets. Lodgings were at first taken for them in London, and they were controlled from the High Commissioner's Office by Sir George Reid's staff, which included Captain Muirhead Collins,<sup>13</sup> official secretary, Lieutenant-Colonel Buckley,<sup>14</sup> military representative, and Dr. Norris,<sup>15</sup> medical adviser. As the number grew, however, it became clear to Reid and

<sup>13</sup> Capt. Sir Muirhead Collins, Kt., C.M.G., R.A.N. Secretary, Department of Defence, 1900/6; temporarily represented the Commonwealth of Australia in London, 1906/10; Official Secretary in Great Britain of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1910/18; b. Chew Magna, Somerset, Eng., 20 Sept., 1852. Died 19 April, 1927.

<sup>14</sup> Lieut.-Col. P. N. Buckley, C.B.E.; R.A.E. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; b. 7 Oct., 1867.

<sup>15</sup> Lieut.-Col. W. P. Norris, A.A.M.C. Medical practitioner; of Melbourne; b. 20 Nov., 1866.



Collins that their small establishment, already charged with much of the finance and provision of the A.I.F., would be completely "swamped" by the task of keeping record of this flood of convalescents. In this difficulty the High Commissioner called in H. C. Smart,<sup>16</sup> an assistant whose power of organising large schemes he especially trusted, and charged him with the task of obtaining adequate quarters and organising a system of records for all Australian convalescents in England. Not far from the office, in a side street, Horseferry-road, was a large Wesleyan Methodist training college for theological students.<sup>17</sup> In October, 1915, with the concurrence of the War Office, this building was hired by the High Commissioner,<sup>18</sup> and in it Smart organised a records office, employing a few military supervisors with a large staff of girls, whose labour for this purpose was as effective as that of soldiers, and much cheaper. The medical staff (responsible for examining convalescents), the staff of the quartermaster's branch (who stored their kit and re-equipped them with clothes), the furlough staff (which arranged railway passes and advised them as to lodgings), the pay officials, postal staff, and the Australian military police (whom it was now found advisable to organise and station in London and in the British provincial centres) had their headquarters in this building. By November the number of Australian soldiers in England—in hospitals or convalescent—had grown to over 10,000; at this stage—including the police, but not the women-clerks—there were employed at Horseferry-road eleven officers and 166 other members of the A.I.F.

In response to General Williams's suggestion, as the convalescent men of the A.I.F. had in England no home-dépôt or dépôt-battalion to which to report when fit for service, a special dépôt was on May 31st formed at Monte Video camp, near Weymouth in the south of England, the War Office informing Sir George Reid that, as the case was urgent, he

<sup>16</sup> Capt. H. C. Smart, C.B.E. Journalist; of Weybridge, Surrey, Eng.; b. Sydney, N.S.W., 8 Sept., 1876.

<sup>17</sup> See Vol. XII, plates 245-7.

<sup>18</sup> Neither the officials of the War Office who were concerned nor Sir George Reid and his staff seem to have been aware that the War Office had undertaken to pay for office accommodation for dominion staffs. The college was therefore, at first, rented by the High Commissioner. This payment was afterwards adjusted by the British Government.

might staff the dépôt with officers and men selected from those of the A.I.F. who were then in England. Reid, however, recommended for the command Sir Newton Moore,<sup>19</sup> the Agent-General for Western Australia, formerly a keen soldier in the Australian militia. This appointment was accepted by the War Office, and confirmed by the Australian Government. Moore organised his establishment chiefly for receiving and training men who were likely to be fit for return to the front, and by October 28th ten drafts had been already sent from Weymouth, including one of 500 men which left on that date for the Dardanelles; 600 had been invalided to Australia as permanently unfit; 1,850 Australians and 600 New Zealanders were still in camp. Men who were marked for return to Australia were received at a camp at Westham, a mile distant. A third dépôt was formed nearer to London, at Abbey Wood (near Woolwich), and a convalescent home at Harefield Park in Middlesex. Finally, as a contribution to the work undertaken for Australians by the British hospitals,<sup>20</sup> teams of A.I.F. doctors and nurses were allotted to the 3rd London General Hospital at Wandsworth (South London),<sup>21</sup> and to the County of London War Hospital at Woodcote Park near Epsom Downs. To these hospitals as far as possible Australian officers and men were sent. Thus on the staff of the various Australian establishments in England there were employed, by the time of Birdwood's conference, nearly 100 officers and 1,000 N.C.O.'s and men of the A.I.F. In view of the fact that it had been entirely extemporised, the High Commissioner's military organisation was carrying on its expanded duties very well—receiving the men who now came from France on leave, storing their kit, keeping record of all who came from hospital, and "boarding" and sending them to Weymouth for return to France and Australia. Later, when Colonel Anderson arrived from Egypt, he reported that the High Commissioner's Office

have been running things pretty well on the whole, but they have easy-going methods that won't suit me.

<sup>19</sup> Major-Gen. Hon. Sir Newton J. Moore, K.C.M.G., V.D. Commanded A. & N.Z. Base Dépôt, Weymouth, England, 1915; A.I.F. Dépôts in the United Kingdom, 1916/17. Licensed surveyor and civil engineer; of Bunbury and Perth, W. Aust.; b. Bunbury, 17 May, 1870.

<sup>20</sup> See footnote on p. 55.

<sup>21</sup> See Vol. XII, plates 378 and 379.

He approved especially of the employment of women, instead of the crowd of soldiers working as clerks—a system to which some of Sellheim's other subordinates would rather have adhered. The London medical staff, however, through the lack of a duly appointed head, had been involved in personal rivalries. Fine work had nevertheless been done by General Williams (then D.D.M.S., A.I.F., London) and Lieutenant-Colonel Flashman<sup>22</sup> in controlling the medical examination, and by Williams in at last securing the provision by Australia of hospital ships and a regular transport service for invalids from England to Australia. Around the headquarters there had grown up several institutions for the assistance of Australian and New Zealand soldiers. The "War Contingent Association"—Australians and New Zealanders resident in London—had established the Anzac Buffet, at which, throughout the war, free meals were served to Anzac troops.<sup>23</sup> Boarding establishments were organised near headquarters, soldiers in hospital were visited, and convalescents entertained. In August, 1915, the Australian Red Cross Society, whose work in London was expanding, had taken over from the association some of these duties. At the end of 1915, to control the fairly numerous staff and personnel of the A.I.F. in England, the Australian Government, with the concurrence of the War Office, had appointed Sir Newton Moore as General Officer Commanding the A.I.F. in the United Kingdom.

It will be observed that all the dépôts in England were connected with the return of sick and wounded to the front or to Australia. To these there were now to be added the far larger dépôts from Egypt, which, however, were mainly connected with the entirely different function of receiving the new reinforcements from Australia and completing their

<sup>22</sup> Lieut.-Col. J. F. Flashman, A.A.M.C. Consultant physician; of Sydney; b. Braidwood, N.S.W., 13 June, 1870. Died of illness, 12 Feb., 1917.

<sup>23</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 249. The servers were voluntary—mostly Australian women resident in London. Mrs. Rattigan was for much of the time honorary matron. An Australian Voluntary Hospital was also formed at the outbreak of war by Lieut.-Colonel W. L'E. Eames (of Newcastle, N.S.W.) and a number of Australian medical men, co-operating with the Countess of Dudley and a committee of London Australians. The hospital, of which Lady Dudley was lady-superintendent, served in France; it did not form part of the A.I.F., but eventually became No. 32 British Stationary Hospital.



training prior to their being sent forward to their units at the front. The system for this purpose was fairly elaborate and extensive. General Spens, with a staff including some very capable British officers and N.C.O's, had by arrangement with Birdwood and Godley in April, 1915, grouped the infantry drafts in provisional battalions. In September, 1915, when the number of these had to be increased to seven, he established a system by which each of the seven brigades of the A.I.F. then at the front was represented by a battalion at his dépôt. Into this were received all reinforcements for that brigade, and from it the brigade received its drafts as required. Thus, the 1st Training Battalion sent reinforcements to the 1st Infantry Brigade, the 2nd Training Battalion to the 2nd Brigade. Basing his system to some extent on that of the British Army (in which units serving abroad were kept supplied with reinforcements by a unit of the same regiment training at the home-dépôt), Spens presently extended his scheme to the light horse, establishing a reserve regiment for each brigade. He found, however, very great trouble in obtaining efficient officers and N.C.O's for his training units, those who were specially sent to him from the front being, as he said, "certainly not selected for efficiency," while those who came to him from hospital were, as a rule, urgently demanded by their colonels at the front. In the British Army the system was of long standing, and battalion commanders, taking a pride in the regimental dépôt-battalions almost as in their own, habitually allotted to them some of their best officers. But the Australian brigades as yet hardly knew of the existence of their training units. Spens—through Maxwell and Legge—obtained from Australia leave to appoint for each training unit a quartermaster, sergeant-major, orderly-room staff, and eight sergeant instructors, to remain for at least two months at a time. But he had few reliable senior officers, and at the end of 1915, when his training battalions ranged in strength from 2,000 to 4,000, the second-in-command of one was a second-lieutenant. He therefore urgently appealed, first to Sellheim and Maxwell, and then to Godley and Birdwood when they returned from Gallipoli, for the appointment of at least a small nucleus of semi-permanent officers for each unit.



But by that time the Australian Government had clearly stated its desire to control through an Australian officer the training of its troops. When the new divisions and all units connected with them had been established, White drew up the organisation of the Australian Training Centre, and provided for a camp commandant, a general staff officer (third grade), and an administrative staff. It was probably thought that Sellheim would himself take active control of the training; otherwise, it must be admitted, this staff was remarkably weak in view of the great importance of its task. On the eve of leaving Egypt White also obtained Birdwood's authority for the appointment of a semi-permanent staff for each training battalion and reserve regiment of light horse. For General Spens it was the irony of fate that the overwhelming difficulty, against which he and his staff had—not without success—battled for a year, was removed at the moment when the control of training was taken from him.

The new training staff was duly completed with Australian officers, and Birdwood and White left Egypt fully believing that the reinforcements would thenceforth be trained by this Australian organisation, the head of which would be responsible to Sellheim. In his memorandum addressed to Murray before leaving,<sup>24</sup> Birdwood had said:

Training Dépôts and units for the incorporation and training of reinforcements have been organised here, and will, as desired by dominion governments, remain under the command of the Branch Headquarters of the A.I.F. and N.Z.E.F.<sup>25</sup>

Realising that Sellheim would probably not have an easy time, White wrote to him that the whole question of the administration of the A.I.F. was still under discussion.

Unfortunately, the C-in-C's (Murray's) views and ours do not agree, and General Birdwood is going to the War Office to discuss the matter with the C.G.S. (Robertson). . . .

After indicating that G.H.Q. was inclined to make the administration of the A.I.F. subordinate to itself—not through malice, but through ignorance of the conditions involved—he added:

You are, however, in a strong position, your functions being clearly defined; and you are in possession of the expressed wishes of the

<sup>24</sup> See p. 152.

<sup>25</sup> Birdwood added that, if reinforcements were subsequently sent to England, the transfer of part of the training establishment would be arranged by the two dominion headquarters.

Australian Government. We are therefore relying on you, with your tact and firmness, to maintain yourself steadfastly. We have no other desire than to help by all means in our power, but our Force is now too big to be administered haphazard and without knowledge of the circumstances. . . .

Murray did not consider himself bound by Birdwood's decision, and Sellheim's position was challenged almost immediately. Months before, on reaching Cairo, Murray had determined to bring the Australian and New Zealand Training Dépôt to Tel el Kebir;<sup>26</sup> and as soon as the 4th and 5th Divisions were clear of that place he ordered this move to be carried out. The Australian and New Zealand training battalions accordingly proceeded thither, and Sellheim visited the camp in order to instal his training staff and its commander. But Murray, who, like most regulars, rightly attached enormous importance to the training dépôt, had an exceptional but quite genuine belief in the value of purely external forms of discipline, and had already telegraphed to Robertson:

As I consider the efficient training of reinforcements, especially for Australian and New Zealand units, a matter of the utmost importance, I propose to concentrate all these at Tel el Kebir and to create a training centre for them. The Australasian troops will continue to be administered as regards organisation by the headquarters of their respective forces, but I wish to put the training under a small general staff. . . .

He outlined this staff, which included a major-general, two general staff officers, and an assistant-provost-marshal, and asked for sanction, which was at once given. Thus on April 12th Sellheim, to his great surprise and indignation, found the control taken out of the hands of the Australian staff by Brigadier-General Hare<sup>27</sup> (who had commanded a brigade of the 29th Division at the Landing) and a British staff appointed by Murray.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> This was one of the several matters which brought about the rupture with Maxwell, who insisted on his right to keep the dépôt near Cairo, where its troops formed an important part of the garrison.

<sup>27</sup> Maj.-Gen. Sir S. W. Hare, K.C.M.G., C.B. Commanded 54th Div., 1916/19. Officer of British Regular Army; of Midcalder, Midlothian, Scotland; b. Gosport, Hants., Eng., 9 Sept., 1867.

<sup>28</sup> Sellheim protested to Murray and Godley, and produced the telegram from the Australian Government indicating its intention that the Australian Commandant should, under Maxwell, be "responsible to the Government of the Commonwealth . . . for co-ordination of training, administration, and organisation." At a conference, specially called, he agreed under protest, "in view of the responsibilities of the Commander-in-Chief," to a compromise by which he and the New Zealand commandant had the right to inspect their respective troops and to be consulted on training methods. The actual influence conferred by this right was purely nominal.

There can be no doubt that, if the control of the dépôts was to be retained in Australian hands, the allotment of a camp commandant—even though that position was occupied by a former brigade commander, Spencer Browne—and a junior officer of the general staff to perform the work, under Sellheim, was an insufficient provision. Even the larger and more important staff appointed by Murray<sup>29</sup> was not entirely adequate. Moreover, although under the scheme instituted by White “only efficient officers and N.C.O’s” were to be posted to a training unit, and it was made a duty of Sellheim to secure from the divisions suitable personnel, yet this in practice proved most difficult. However, by May 3rd Godley wrote that the training units had now “quite an averagely good lot of regimental officers,” and to protect those officers and also the N.C.O’s, and to ensure that they should be left sufficiently long at the dépôt, he ordered that they were

not to be passed over for promotion in their units (*i.e.*, were to receive promotion as if they were serving with their unit). . . . They are entirely different from the reinforcement officers and men (the new drafts from Australia), and should not be relieved . . . under six months unless under exceptional circumstances. It will be realised that it is in the best interests of the divisions to have—as the permanent staff of their training battalions, regiments, or dépôts—only first-class officers, N.C.O’s, and men. Otherwise the reinforcements, when required, will not be as well trained as they might be.

But he wrote on the same day that the A.I.F. had not yet provided this vital part of its organisation with an adequate head. “What we want is a good, live, young, active, energetic major-general.”

Thus, at the time when it was decided to transfer the A.I.F. base to London, Australia had in Egypt two highly important base organisations—

(1) The training units (established under White’s *Circular Memorandum No. 40*),<sup>30</sup> comprising the training battalions and light horse reserve regiments. Godley had been authorised (by the same memorandum)

<sup>29</sup> At the end of April General Hare was sent to the Canal, changing places with General Inglefield of the 54th Division (*see Vol. II, p. 799*).

<sup>30</sup> Superseding a previous order—*A. & N.Z. Corps General Staff Circular No. 6* of Jan. 10—a scheme drawn up by White consequent upon an application by Spens to Godley as G.O.C., A.I.F., when first the corps returned to Egypt. This scheme resembled the later one, but was held up by the reorganisation of the A.I.F.

to establish, when need should arise, an engineer dépôt for training reinforcements for all companies and similar dépôts for the artillery and army service corps.<sup>31</sup> All these were nominally under Sellheim.

(2) The A.I.F. Headquarters directly under Sellheim, who was responsible to Birdwood (through Godley) for the work of the records, finance, and other sections of his base.<sup>32</sup>

It will be observed that the A.I.F. had in Egypt no separate dépôt, such as it possessed in England, for the reception and training of men returning from hospital. They were accommodated at the Training Centre in a special camp, from which, when fit, they passed into the training battalions or direct to their units.

Upon the decision that the base and training dépôts should be brought from Egypt to England, Birdwood naturally determined that the staff organised in London by Smart and Flashman must be abolished and Sir Newton Moore's command in the United Kingdom terminated. On April 29th the War Office ordered Murray to send over at once the Australian and New Zealand headquarters; the training dépôts were to follow as soon as camps had been prepared for their reception.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile Birdwood asked Sir Newton Moore if he would voluntarily assist General Howse in inspecting the camps available and making the necessary preparations. Sellheim and his base arrived in London on May 21st. The suitability of the Horseferry-road offices had been widely criticised—chiefly, at that time, by those who thought they were much larger than was necessary.<sup>34</sup> Other sites were

<sup>31</sup> That for the engineers was formed on May 19.

<sup>32</sup> See *Vols. I (p. 119) and II (chap. xiv)*.

<sup>33</sup> Murray, in accepting this decision, replied that he had feared it was unavoidable "in face of pressure I knew would be brought to bear. I nevertheless regret decision as it will materially affect our position in Egypt. . . . There will be a risk if my reserve in the shape of the Australian reinforcements is taken away." He hoped that Egypt would still be a rendezvous of troops passing from Australia and New Zealand to France, "as even in their partially trained state they form a valuable reserve." On May 22, however, it was ordered that all such reinforcements should in future proceed by way of The Cape.

<sup>34</sup> Within a year the Horseferry-road offices had become too small, the need for more accommodation being urgent. At this time the chief criticism was that the Australian centre was in an area which almost deserved to be classed as a "slum." There was some truth in this, the poorer and richer quarters being so intermingled that it was difficult in that neighbourhood entirely to avoid slum conditions.



offered by the War Office, particularly the dry bed of the lake in St. James's Park, on which large temporary offices were afterwards erected; but, after inspecting them with Smart, Sellheim and Anderson decided to stay at Horseferry-road. The improvised staff was at once displaced by that from Egypt, and thenceforth the High Commissioner's Office—which was shortly afterwards moved into the unfinished Australia House—had little concern in the maintenance of the A.I.F. Sellheim's organisation was now, and for the rest of the war, known as "Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F."<sup>35</sup> The unfortunate jealousies which had hampered the medical service of the A.I.F. disappeared with the attachment to Sellheim's headquarters of a very strong and acknowledged head of that service in the person of General Howse. Howse's position had been uncertain until he actually came to England and interviewed the Director-General of the British service, Sir Alfred Keogh,<sup>36</sup> who was at first inclined to insist that the Australian must be his subordinate, with the title of "deputy-director." Howse, however, stood out for and obtained complete independence, so far as concerned the control of the medical personnel in the A.I.F. The policy—whether of organisation, evacuation, or prevention of disease—was, except in one or two matters,<sup>37</sup> laid down entirely by the British.

On May 19th Newton Moore and Howse made their inspection of the camps in the Salisbury area offered to the A.I.F. These all lay in the folds of the rolling grassy country,

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<sup>35</sup> A branch H.Q. under Lieut.-Col. O. A. Tunbridge (of Sydney) was left in Cairo to administer—first under Godley and later under Chauvel—the portion of the A.I.F. which continued to be based on Egypt. (*See Vol. XII, plate 172.*)

<sup>36</sup> Lieut.-Gen. Sir Alfred Keogh, G.C.B., G.C.V.O.; R.A.M.C. Director-General, Army Medical Service, 1904/10, 1914/18; of County Roscommon, Ireland; b. Dublin, 3 July, 1857.

<sup>37</sup> Inoculation and vaccination were throughout the war compulsory in the Australian forces, whereas the British Government, in spite of the strongly expressed opinion of the medical authorities, made these precautions voluntary. A further, and not unimportant, difference in method was that in the Australian force the special sanitary units were mobile, accompanying the divisions; the sanitary appliances used in the field were usually made by the combatant units themselves, the sanitary units being employed (somewhat similarly to the engineers) in supervising and instructing the combatant units in this work. In the British army in France sanitary units were made stationary army-troops, and did much of the constructional work for the combatant units. The difference between the policy of the British and Australian services in respect of dentists has already been mentioned (*p. 43; and Vol. II, pp. 375-6*).

ten to twenty miles from Salisbury, some of them within sight of Stonehenge. For the reception and training of the new 3rd Division from Australia Howse and Moore chose Lark Hill, from which a British division was moving out, leaving nineteen camps for 30,000 men. For the training units they selected four camps at Rollestone, four at Parkhouse, eight at Perham Downs, and a section of the new and excellently appointed barracks of the British Army at Tidworth. This section would hold 2,000 men, but was made available only on condition that the other camps had been previously filled. Apart from the barracks, the camps offered would hold 41,000 men, and were thus barely sufficient for the 3rd Division and the training units. In addition to these, the dépôts already established for receiving men returned from hospital were to be retained henceforth as an organisation totally separate from the training dépôts, and not combined with them as in Egypt. As Weymouth would soon overflow, Howse and Moore decided to allocate the surplus to some of the camps at Perham Downs.<sup>38</sup>



*The numbers represent camps near Salisbury—*

*1. Perham Downs ; 2. Lark Hill ; 3. Rollestone ; 4. Parkhouse.*

Early in June the training units began to arrive. The War Office had been prepared for their reception by Murray—

I think I ought to warn you that it (the Australian Training Centre) consists of over 25,000 men, who will require a large staff of officers with special knowledge of training to deal with them in order to ensure that proper value is received from this magnificent raw material. Special attention will have to be paid to discipline, in which the bulk of the Australians are still lacking. Moreover, for purposes of discipline, as well as for those of training, it is, in my opinion, absolutely essential that the men at the Training Centre should be formed into brigades under experienced brigadiers who are good disciplinarians. . .

<sup>38</sup> See Vol. XII, plates 254-7.

This step—the grouping of training battalions into brigades—Murray himself had intended to adopt if the training units had remained in Egypt.<sup>39</sup> On arrival in England, therefore, they were distributed as follows:

No. 1 Group—for the 1st Division.  
 (This group comprised the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Training Battalions for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Infantry Brigades—and thus represented the infantry of the 1st Division; the Pioneer Training Battalion, for all divisions, was also at first included in this group) .. .. Perham Downs.

No. 2 Group—for the 2nd and 4th Divisions. (This group comprised the 5th, 6th, and 7th, and 4th, 12th, and 13th Training Battalions) .. Rollestone.

No. 5 Group—for the 5th Division.  
 (This group comprised the 8th, 14th, and 15th Training Battalions) .. .. Lark Hill.

Army Service Corps Dépôt, Engineers' and Signallers' Dépôt, and Army Medical Corps Dépôt .. Parkhouse.

Artillery Dépôt .. .. Lark Hill.

Machine-gun corps Dépôt .. .. Tidworth.

The chief training centre of the A.I.F. remained in the Salisbury area until the end of the war; but some of the specialist corps were almost immediately after arrival moved away to other parts of England, where the training of those several services in the British Army was being carried on. Thus the engineers (except the mounted sections) were transferred on June 20th to Christchurch, and on November 13th

<sup>39</sup> It had been advocated by the staff which was carrying out the training, and Murray, though at first sceptical, had been converted to their view.

to Brightlingsea on the Essex coast. The signallers were sent in August to Shefford near Hitchin, and the machine-gunners on August 21st to Belton Park near Grantham. These movements were generally welcomed by the units, since they were thus pitted against troops of their own branch in the British service and came under the enthusiastic instruction of the best British experts. The Australians were quick to learn, and after a month their British instructors were in many cases gradually replaced by Australians. "We were sorry to lose them (the British instructors)," says the diary of the machine-gun school. "They had instilled the right spirit."

The Australian *dépôts* for troops who had returned from hospital were somewhat similar to those maintained by the British in each of the great military "Commands" into which the kingdom was divided, and were consequently known as the "Command *Dépôts*." The training and movements of these men were of course entirely different from those of the reinforcements from Australia, being governed by a system of medical inspection under which the troops were classified weekly into categories according to their fitness for service. The command *dépôts* were also widely different from the training *dépôts* for reinforcements in that their troops were already thoroughly trained and required gradual hardening rather than elementary instruction.<sup>40</sup> Those first formed were:

- |   |       |                                  |
|---|-------|----------------------------------|
| No. 1 (for receiving troops fit to be drafted to their units at the front)  | .. .. | Perham Downs.                    |
| No. 2 (for receiving men unfit for return to service within six months and therefore to be returned to Australia) | ..    | Weymouth.                        |
| No. 3 (temporarily established to receive the overflow—caused by loss in the Somme fighting—from No. 1)           | .. .. | Bovington Camp,<br>Wool, Dorset. |

<sup>40</sup> They also included a sprinkling of ex-offenders from the military prisons, whose passage to the front through this channel caused, in the later years of the war, occasional trouble.



No. 4 (formed on 26th October, 1916, to receive the overflow from the other dépôts; it became a dépôt for men likely to be fit in three months) .. Worgret Hill, near Wareham.

Of these training and command dépôts, as well as of the administrative offices in London, Sellheim was now the unquestioned head.<sup>41</sup> His control of the dépôts, however, had necessarily to be discharged through his subordinate, the officer commanding the dépôts. So far as the method and progress of training was concerned, the work had to be carried

<sup>41</sup> The senior staffs of the A.I.F. about this time were—

#### HEADQUARTERS, A.I.F.

Lieutenant-General Sir W. R. Birdwood, commanding.  
Lieutenant-Colonel T. Griffiths, A.A.G.; Lieutenant P. E. Coleman, D.A.A.G.

#### *A.I.F. Headquarters, Egypt.*

Major-General H. G. Chauvel, commanding.  
Major F. G. Newton, A.A.G.

#### *Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F.*

##### *London.*

*Commandant:* (until 31 July, 1916) Brigadier-General V. C. M. Sellheim; (from 1 August) Colonel R. M. McC. Anderson.

Captain C. L. Baillieu (*Staff-Captain*); Lieutenant-Colonel C. A. K. Johnson and Captain J. W. Donnelly (*Adjutant-General's Branch*); Captain H. E. Butler and Lieutenant R. W. Murphy (*Records*); Major H. J. Wright, Lieutenant R. W. Walker, and Lieutenant G. Sherington (*Quartermaster-General's Branch*); Surgeon-General N. R. Howse, V.C., Colonel W. W. Giblin, and Major T. E. V. Hurley (*Medical*); Colonel E. A. Kendall (*Veterinary*); Lieutenant-Colonel T. W. Jolliffe, Captain H. S. Evans, and Captain F. H. Wickham (*Finance*); Lieutenant-Colonel E. T. Leane (*Ordnance*); Captain C. S. Cunningham (*Postal*); Captain T. V. Brown (*Police*).

##### *Cairo.*

*Commandant:* Colonel O. A. Tunbridge (succeeded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Paine).

Lieutenant C. R. E. Jennings (*Adjutant-General's Branch*); Captain H. S. G. Hall (*Records*); Captain R. M. Gowing (*Quartermaster-General's Branch*); Lieutenant-Colonel R. M. Downes and Major D. S. Mackenzie (*Medical*); Major J. Kendall (*Veterinary*); Captain T. R. Evans (*Finance*); Captain F. J. Robins (*Ordnance*).

#### *A.I.F. Dépôts in the United Kingdom.\**

Brigadier-General Hon. Sir Newton J. Moore, commanding.

Lieutenants K. C. D. Dawson and E. E. G. Boyd (*Aides-de-camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Moffitt, Essex Regiment (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. S. Knox, East Yorks Regiment, Major G. Wall, Captain A. M. Phillips, Captain G. C. Neech, Lieutenant B. G. Matthews (*Administrative Staff*); Colonel R. J. Millard (*Medical*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Tedder (*Supply & Transport*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. Williams (*Police*).

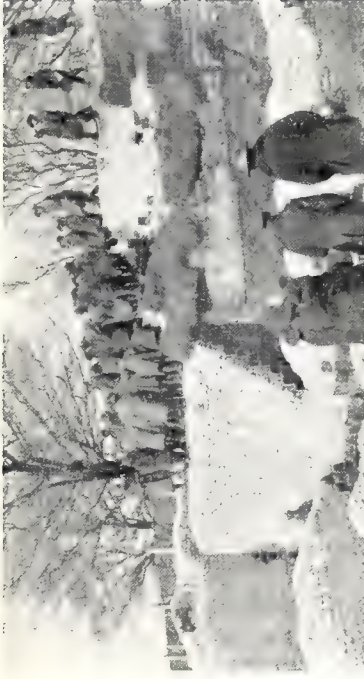
\* (Brigadier-General R. Spencer Browne commanded the Training Dépôt until July 25, when the organisation was altered, the dépôts for convalescents being included in a combined command under the above title.)

on under the instructions and to the satisfaction of the British general holding the very important "Southern Command," in which Salisbury lay; and, just as the War Office had insisted upon dealing with only one representative in London of each dominion, so it now indicated its desire that a single officer should be appointed to control the three Australian group-commanders on Salisbury Plain, thus enabling the local British commander to deal with one Australian authority and not three.

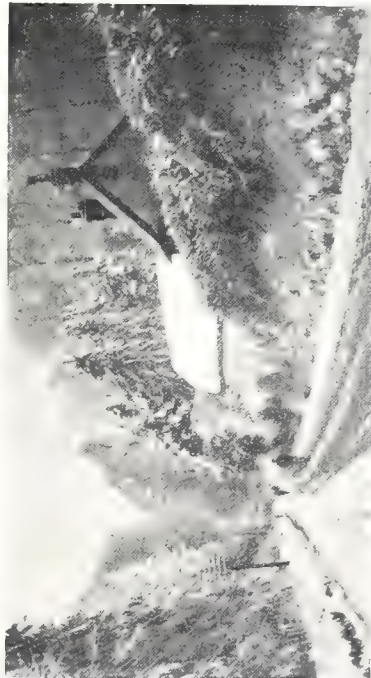
Sellheim referred this request to Birdwood. It was now clear that the officer to be entrusted, under Sellheim, with this work could only be one of high rank and first-rate ability and strength. The rapid expansion of the A.I.F. had left few good seniors available; Birdwood urgently required one or two "spare" brigadiers in case the command of a division might become vacant, and about this time sent to Egypt for Antill. The *dépôt* command therefore provided a somewhat difficult problem. About this time there also arose the question as to whether Sellheim himself was the most suitable representative for handling the impending negotiations with the War Office concerning the method of payment for goods and services supplied to the A.I.F. Strong suggestions were put forward that Colonel Anderson, being a business man, was better suited for this task; and Keith Murdoch, who wielded a very strong influence with the Australian Ministry, and who doubted whether Sellheim could face the War Office on equal terms, urged Hughes to make a change in the command. The Prime Minister himself was of opinion that at this juncture the London office required not a soldier but a business man. Birdwood, whom he asked to confer with him, was unable to come, but sent White, who, after a series of negotiations, agreed that Anderson should take over the A.I.F. Administrative Headquarters, and Newton Moore the *dépôts*, Sellheim returning to Australia with the promise of an important position. This was a compromise, inasmuch as, though the decision secured what White believed to be essential—supreme control by Birdwood of the whole of the A.I.F. overseas—he was not fully convinced that Anderson, without military training, would be capable of smoothly controlling the administrative machinery. Professional training would,



19. View near Sutton Veny camp.



20. Australian soldiers examining the ancient walls of Old Sarum. (Visits were organised by the Y.M.C.A.)



21. Codford village in the snow.



22. Troops leaving Codford camp for return to Australia, April 1910.

SCENES IN THE DÉPÔT AREA NEAR SALISBURY, ENGLAND

*Taken by Sapper J. H. Edmunds, and Pte. Stuart Coy.*

*To face p. 11.*





23. ARTILLERY OF THE 2ND DIVISION BEING INSPECTED BY THE RT. HON. W. M. HUGHES (PRIME MINISTER) AND RT. HON. ANDREW FISHER (HIGH COMMISSIONER) ON 1ST JUNE, 1916

*Inset:* General Birdwood and Rt. Hon. W. M. Hughes at Corps Headquarters, La-Motte-au-Bois.



however, now be less important in one respect—the London commandant was no longer actively to control the Salisbury dépôts but rather to act as the channel through which Birdwood passed his orders thither.

There were thus established in England two Australian military centres on the efficient working of which the A.I.F. closely depended. Anderson, a man of high education, wide interests, keen though veiled ambition, and great ability, arranged within two months a complete financial readjustment with the War Office. Under this, instead of an attempt being made to account for every item of clothing, arms, equipment, and other goods supplied to the Australian troops, a fixed rate per head for their maintenance was agreed upon, and the complicated accounting immediately ceased. It is true that there had still to be made a computation of the amount owing by Australia up to this date under the old system, and that this was not finished until 1921, a finance officer of the A.I.F., Major Langslow,<sup>42</sup> remaining in England for the purpose. But the arrangement made by Anderson and the War Office saved a vast amount of intricate accounting and other trouble. It was even arranged that an average should be struck of the amount of ammunition fired by the artillery behind the whole British line, and that the Australian force should pay its due proportion. The War Office was represented in these negotiations by men of brilliant ability, and the British attitude, as throughout all financial dealings with Australia during the war, combined a firm insistence on main principles with a marked liberality in the adjustment of details when once those principles had been arrived at. For negotiating with men such as these Anderson's business ability was invaluable.

The quartermaster-general's branch of Anderson's headquarters was already operating satisfactorily, he having, while in Egypt, straightened out a tangle of payments for horses and clothing, and—without inquiring too deeply into certain contracts in which he suspected corruption—instituted a proper audit and control of stores. The ordnance system and staff of the British Army he found to be so efficient that he decided

<sup>42</sup> Maj. M. C. Langslow, M.B.E.; Aust. Army Pay Corps. Clerk; of Elsternwick, Vic.; b. Maldon, Vic., 20 June, 1889.

to rely upon it almost entirely, merely training a small Australian staff in the British methods. With regard to the British canteens, he wrote to the War Office:

Although I brought an expert staff here to open canteens, I thought the arrangements made by you were so admirable that I disbanded the staff.

In the pay branch a growing confusion had already been investigated before his arrival, Colonel Laing,<sup>43</sup> an elderly accountant of the Defence Department, having been sent over for the purpose. This branch was endeavouring to cope, not only with the payment of troops, but to some extent with the higher finance.<sup>44</sup> Laing presented a bulky report which pointed out that proper arrangements for audit were lacking. Anderson, though he did not adopt this report, appears to have arrived at somewhat similar conclusions. Lieutenant-Colonel Jolliffe,<sup>45</sup> who in consequence of Laing's report had been sent over as auditor, was made paymaster. Under him, with H. S. Evans<sup>46</sup> (a young accountant who had come over as a sergeant) raised to second-in-command and supported by a second young accountant, F. Grassick,<sup>47</sup> and an exceptionally fine staff, the Pay Branch began gradually to overcome the muddle of the old system.<sup>48</sup>

Anderson had brought with him a strong business staff, and the methods of the Australian Headquarters were undoubtedly improved by them in certain respects. For example, the system of issue of clothing to men coming out of hospital was settled by Major Wright,<sup>49</sup> his chief assistant, and, later, a sweeping and completely successful reform in

<sup>43</sup> Col. J. B. Laing. Finance Member, Aust. Military Board; of South Yarra, Vic.; b. 28 May, 1858.

<sup>44</sup> For example, it was concerned with the method of paying for advances to Australian troops of cash and material. On 26 March, 1915, Australia paid £500,000 on account of a debt of £715,000 under this head. By September, 1916, the Commonwealth was paying the War Office £450,000 a month to meet the pay of troops.

<sup>45</sup> Lieut.-Col. T. W. Jolliffe, C.M.G. Chief Paymaster, A.I.F., 1917. Civil servant; of Melbourne; b. 16 March, 1873.

<sup>46</sup> Lieut.-Col. H. S. Evans, C.M.G. Chief Paymaster, A.I.F., 1917/18. Public accountant and auditor; of Melbourne; b. Woollahra, N.S.W., 2 March, 1887.

<sup>47</sup> Major F. Grassick, O.B.E.; Aust. Army Pay Corps. Accountant; of Melbourne; b. Dublin, Ireland, Oct., 1891.

<sup>48</sup> The reforms involved the audit of the paybook of every man in the force, in the man's presence, and the issue to him of a new form of paybook. It was not until 1917 that the tangle was entirely unravelled and the authorities in Australia could be informed with certainty of the amount due to every man discharged from the A.I.F.

<sup>49</sup> Lieut.-Col. H. J. Wright, C.M.G., A.Q.M.G., Admin. H.Q., A.I.F., 1916/18. Contractor; of Sydney; b. Herberton, Q'land, 5 May, 1888.

postal methods was instituted, partly on the initiative of Major Sherington.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, for the reception of Australian soldiers on leave, he built up in Cairo the Anzac Hostel and in London the War Chest Club, opposite the gates of the Headquarters in Horseferry-road.<sup>51</sup> These were supported by the "comforts" funds supplied in Australia, and, by affording homes and club-rooms in the two great cities, were of much value to the force. Nevertheless Anderson's reign at headquarters was not altogether a happy one, since, though gifted with a keen sense of humour and quick intelligence, he lacked the faculty of retaining the complete confidence of his colleagues. In a vast loyal service such as that of the A.I.F., efficiency hung largely on mutual trust and upon all official dealings being carried through with tact and restraint under the recognised forms and along the recognised channels. Of these Anderson was by nature impatient, and he was aggressive when thwarted. Shortly after the completion of his financial work, having received promotion to brigadier-general's rank and a knighthood, he returned to Australia, being succeeded by Colonel Griffiths, whose régime belongs to another volume.

Newton Moore, now controlling the dépôts, was a commander who, though in former years a keen militia officer, did not, on first acquaintance, leave an impression of ability. Yet under a bluff exterior he had, though slow of speech and heavy of movement, a wide experience of men and the ability to handle them; and these qualities, together with the politician's sense of what men were feeling, a kindly humour, marked determination, and loyal and—to all who understood him—simple nature, rendered him far more successful than White or Birdwood had anticipated.<sup>52</sup> The training in his dépôts (as in all others in the Southern Command) had to be carried out to the satisfaction of Sir Henry Sclater<sup>53</sup> and his staff, the principle being that no troops, British or dominion, should be sent to France until passed as sufficiently trained

<sup>50</sup> Maj. G. Sherington, O.B.E. D.A.Q.M.G., Admin. H.Q., A.I.F., 1916/18. Manufacturer; of Waverley, N.S.W.; b. Dulwich, London, Eng., 29 Aug., 1879. Died 24 July, 1928.

<sup>51</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 247.

<sup>52</sup> Gen. White was aware of Moore's capacity, but feared that he might be out of date in his military methods, and lacking his earlier energy.

<sup>53</sup> Gen. Sir H. C. Sclater, G.C.B., G.B.E. G.O.C.-in-Chief, Southern Command, England, 1916/19. Officer of British Regular Army; of Edenbridge, Kent, Eng.; b. Newick Park, Sussex, Eng., 5 Nov., 1855. Died 26 Sept., 1923.



according to the standards laid down by the War Office. It was Moore who had the making of the dépôt command, and, when he left it a year later, the dépôt-appointments—which in Egypt had been looked upon as receptacles for elderly men or failures—were considered worthy of being filled by men like M'Cay, Gellibrand, and MacLagan.

Independent of Moore, during its training on Salisbury Plain, was the 3rd Australian Division. When the units of this division began, in July 1916, to arrive from various parts of Australia and to enter upon their long term of organisation and training, Birdwood decided, though with hesitation, to give the command to Monash. In this decision he was amply justified. With the assistance of Lieutenant-Colonel Jackson (previously chief of staff of the 2nd Division) and a good staff, and taking full advantage of the opportunities existing on the Plain, Monash gave his division a training such as not even the original 1st Division at Mena had experienced.<sup>54</sup> It was organised with the minutest care stage by stage until, in the last months, trench-lines (of a sort) were dug and occupied, patrols sent into "No-Man's Land," reliefs carried out, and even mines exploded, in an endeavour to accustom officers and men to the incidents of trench-warfare.

The 3rd Division did not pass over to France until nearly the end of 1916, but the reinforcements and the men returning after recovery from wounds—two quite separate streams—began to flow thither almost as soon as the dépôts were established. Units at the front obtained their reinforcements by an automatic system, their losses (from whatever cause) being weekly reported by them on a "field return" (known as "Army Form B.213")<sup>55</sup> to the "Third Echelon" of G.H.Q., which compiled and

<sup>54</sup> The staff of the 3rd Division at this time was:

Major-General J. Monash, commanding.

Lieutenants A. C. Colman, **A.I.F.**, and E. L. Simonson, **A.I.F.** (*Aides-de-camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. N. Jackson, Border Regiment, Major G. G. E. Wylly, V.C., Indian Army, Major G. F. Wootten, **A.I.F.** (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. Farmar, Lancashire Fusiliers, Major R. E. Jackson, **A.I.F.**, Captain C. A. Pyke, **A.I.F.** (*Administrative Staff*); Brigadier-General H. W. Grimwade, **A.I.F.** (*Artillery*); Lieutenant-Colonel H. O. Clogstoun, R.E. (*Engineers*); Major T. C. Wilson, **A.I.F.** (*Signals*); Lieutenant-Colonel R. Dowse, **A.I.F.** (*Supply & Transport*); Lieutenant-Colonel A. T. White, **A.I.F.**, and Major C. E. Wassell, **A.I.F.** (*Medical*); Major H. A. Woodruff, **A.I.F.** (*Veterinary*); Lieutenant W. Jack, **A.I.F.** (*Ordnance*); Major Sir H. E. Dering, Bt., Royal East Kent Yeomanry (*Police*).

<sup>55</sup> After big engagements, however, divisions telegraphed their losses to Third Echelon.



sent forward to the dépôts in England demands for the exact numbers required to make up the shortages. On receipt of this demand the specified number of trained reinforcements, if available, was sent to France at once. They were drawn from the training dépôts, or from the command dépôts, or from both, these two streams uniting only when they reached the base dépôts at Etaples near Boulogne on the French coast. Here, amid the numerous British dépôts, there had been established base dépôts for the infantry of each of the Australian divisions in France, and an Australian General Base Dépôt for the light horse, artillery, and other arms.<sup>56</sup> Here all the drafts—though they had already been passed in England as fully trained—were subjected to the further tests laid down by G.H.Q., comprising, in 1916, at least ten days' additional training. Quartered at their divisional camps, they were marched daily to a rendezvous, where they split up into parties to be trained,<sup>57</sup> generally under English instructional officers. The strict medical check laid down by G.H.Q. upon soldiers entering France was also here carried out, both on those entering and on those leaving the dépôts.<sup>58</sup> They were also put through certain "gas" tests to give them confidence against this form of attack, and were fitted with gas helmets.

The delay thus imposed was often exasperating both to the drafts and to the commanders who had need of them. Moreover as a rule the sort of training really required by the drafts was inurement to war conditions, which could be better acquired near the front. To afford this training two measures were adopted. First, there were formed what were known as "entrenching battalions"—really advanced sections of the troops from the divisional bases, organised as battalions to undertake works near the line. Thus the infantry of the I Anzac Corps for a time drew its reinforcements from the 1st Anzac Entrenching Battalion, which in turn was replenished from the base. But at a very early stage, in consequence of the heavy losses at Pozières, all the men of

<sup>56</sup> Machine-gunners were, however, from Nov., 1916, sent to the British machine-gun dépôt.

<sup>57</sup> Mostly at the famous training ground known as the "Bull Ring."

<sup>58</sup> The classes were: "A"—fit for general service; "T.B."—Temporary Base (retained either for dental or other specialist treatment or for further training); "P.B."—fit for permanent duty at the base; "P.U."—permanently unfit for general service. Men in the T.B. class were re-examined weekly, and those in the P.B. class monthly. A fixed number of P.B. men were allotted to carry on the work of the base. Any excess of this number were returned to England when transport was available.

the entrenching battalion were absorbed by the fighting units, and it ceased to be employed as a channel for infantry reinforcements.<sup>59</sup> The second measure, by which undue delay at the base dépôts was ultimately avoided, was the reduction of the G.H.Q. tests to a mere course of instruction against gas. At a still later stage even this instruction was given nearer to the front.

The stationing of the Australian dépôts at Etaples was, however, inconvenient, inasmuch as the line of transport of the drafts—from Southampton to Etaples—crossed that of the Canadians, whose English dépôts were near Folkestone and their French dépôts at Le Havre. At Folkestone conflicts occurred between Australians and the Canadian military police. Consequently in June, 1917, the French dépôts of the two dominions changed places. The Australian dépôts were thus transferred to the pretty valley of Harfleur, outside Le Havre, where—eventually reduced to two,<sup>60</sup> one for the infantry and pioneers, and the other for the divisional, corps, and army troops—they remained to the end of the war.

The base dépôts in France were fed from another source besides the English dépôts. The reason for this was that not all the sick and wounded were sent to hospitals in the United Kingdom. The average time occupied by the passage of a man from the battlefield in France through dressing station (field ambulance), casualty clearing station, general (or stationary) hospital, convalescent home, command dépôt, and divisional base dépôt before



*Arrows show routes of drafts until June, 1917*

<sup>59</sup> The H.Q. and staff of the battalion, however, continued to exist and shortly afterwards absorbed the surplus reinforcements (9 officers and 203 men) of the Australian tunnelling companies. It worked first with the Canadian tunnellers at St. Eloi, The Bluff, and The Ravine (at Ypres), and during the ensuing winter on the Somme, but was abolished late in 1917.

<sup>60</sup> Known respectively as the "Australian Infantry Base Dépôt" and the "Australian General Base Dépôt." (See Vol. XII, plates 491-2.)

returning to his unit was at least six months; his progress, which at each stage was checked and controlled by the medical service, could hardly be accomplished in much less. But it was not necessary that all the sick or wounded should go the full round of this elaborate machine. If a man's case could be satisfactorily dealt with by the field ambulance or the casualty clearing station—which, except in time of pressure, could retain a patient for two or three days—he could be returned thence straight to his unit. To make this easier, the field ambulances were occasionally expanded into “rest stations,” situated close behind the front, where slight cases of illness or “shock” (which was often really over-strain) could be retained for as much as a fortnight. Moreover a large number of general or stationary hospitals (including Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Australian General Hospitals)<sup>61</sup> were in France, and a man sent from the casualty clearing station to one of these might be—and generally was, if his progress permitted—sent to one of the British convalescent dépôts in France and thence to the base dépôt at Etaples or Le Havre instead of to England and the command dépôts.<sup>62</sup> The average time occupied in making this shorter circle from the front and back again is said to have been three months.

Such, briefly outlined, was the portion of the organisation maintained by Australia behind her troops in France. As has been said in a previous chapter,<sup>63</sup> only one part—that relating to personnel—of the enormous work of the base was undertaken by the A.I.F. It was the men and not the material that required separate treatment. Their food, ammunition, equipment, the stores used in their trenches and works, and the drugs for their hospitals were, with slight exceptions, no different from those of other soldiers in the British armies.<sup>64</sup> It is true that the preference of Australian troops for uniforms

<sup>61</sup> At Rouen, Wimereux, and Rouen respectively. (See Vol. XII, plates 377, 486, 487.)

<sup>62</sup> In 1918 a special convalescent dépôt was established in France for Australians.

<sup>63</sup> Vol. II, pp. 395-8.

<sup>64</sup> Australian and New Zealand soldiers, in consequence of the fact that they were accustomed to a more generous diet, were during certain periods allowed a slightly larger meat or bread ration than the British. There were also periods (e.g., the Gallipoli campaign, during which the demand from Anzac for castor oil was enormous) when the requirements of the Australian and New Zealand troops in the matter of drugs were not identical with those of the British.



and hats of a special cloth and colour, and for Australian-made boots, caused the authorities to make special arrangements for the supply. But, except for this, the provision for the A.I.F. was in no way differentiated from that of the rest of the British Army, and the whole vast business of organising it was carried out entirely by the British authorities. In the huge stores, dépôts, and reconditioning and other factories<sup>65</sup> at Calais and elsewhere the Australian staff and troops had no part. The only expeditionary force for which the Australian authorities undertook these responsibilities was that which occupied German New Guinea.

It is true that, as has been said before,<sup>66</sup> a few units were supplied to assist the British authorities in carrying out the work of the base and lines of communication, or for special services outside the infantry divisions. This had been done on no definite lines. Sometimes the British Government inquired whether some service specially required could be undertaken by Australia; at other times—occasionally on a suggestion emanating from an Australian profession or industry—the Commonwealth Government asked if the offer of some specialist unit would be welcomed. Thus it was on a suggestion from England that the Half-Flight had been sent to Mesopotamia and the No. 1 Flying Squadron to the Canal and that the Imperial Camel Corps had been raised largely from the A.I.F. in Egypt,<sup>67</sup> while it was on the initiative of Australia that the Mining Battalion and Heavy Artillery Group had been raised and despatched to England. Moreover, since the addition of each new division at the front meant the provision of a recognised group of units—such as a bakery, a butchery, certain hospitals, and motor-transport—on the lines of communication or at the base, Australia had provided some of these units; but this provision had been made chiefly at the time of sending the first contingent in 1914, it being afterwards assumed by the Australian staff that the Commonwealth

<sup>65</sup> Establishments for reconditioning boots, clothes, gas masks, helmets, equipment, or for manufacturing engineer-stores, camouflage netting, and other necessities.

<sup>66</sup> *Vol. II*, p. 397.

<sup>67</sup> The Imperial Camel Corps was a British unit formed mainly of Australian troops, whose special adaptability for this service was recognised by Murray. They remained members of the A.I.F., and when the corps was dissolved in 1918 the 5th Light Horse Brigade was formed from its members.



was expected to supply only those units which were explicitly offered by it and accepted, and that all the rest would be provided by the War Office. The same assumption caused the staff and medical authorities in Melbourne, in spite of repeated requests from Surgeon-General Williams, to delay the provision of the necessary hospital ships for carriage of wounded to Australia.<sup>68</sup> At the time of the reorganisation of the A.I.F. in Egypt the fact that each of the old Anzac divisions was provided with different line-of-communication units caused some perplexity. On a query being received from the War Office, Birdwood arranged to raise (for each of those which did not already possess them) a bakery, a butchery, five dépôt units of supply, and a sanitary section, but not hospitals or motor-transport.<sup>69</sup> About the same time the question of the hospitals had been independently raised in Great Britain. The A.I.F. had three casualty clearing stations, three stationary and three general hospitals—that is to say, provision for little more than one division.<sup>70</sup> In addition, certain A.I.F. teams were working in British hospitals, and, at the request of the War Office, a hundred medical men and a hundred nurses had been raised to serve in the British Army. In April 1916 a suggestion, cabled by the High Commissioner, that Australia should provide hospital accommodation for a further 2,000 men in England caused the Commonwealth Government to inquire whether it was desired that Australia should provide the whole of the hospital accommodation for its troops. The British medical authorities had not made the suggestion,<sup>71</sup> and, being anxious not to ask too much of a dominion government, replied that they had no such intention but gratefully accepted whatever Australia thought fit to provide. The British Government appears naturally to have desired that such divisions as were provided should be complete, not only in themselves but with at least their lines-of-communication units. No agreement, however, was made, and until the end of the war the general practice was that the dominion governments

<sup>68</sup> The Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce, overruled the opposition of his staff.

<sup>69</sup> Motor-transport had been provided for the 1st Division, but it had been sent to England and had never served with its division.

<sup>70</sup> The greater part of this provision had been made for the 1st Division.

<sup>71</sup> The suggestion really originated with General Williams, but it was assumed in Australia that the matter had been raised by the British D.G.M.S.

offered such troops and units as they thought fit, and the War Office provided any services by which it was necessary to supplement them.

Under this haphazard arrangement the Australian Government offered in August, 1916, to send three motor-transport companies;<sup>72</sup> these, being accepted, were afterwards used by Birdwood to complete the motor-transport services for his five divisions in France. In July, 1916, the War Office, finding that the available British railway-men were not sufficient for the enormous projected increase in the railway staff in France, inquired whether any could be sent from Australia. As the Australian Cabinet, in view of the serious recruiting problems which followed the Battle of Pozières, decided about that time that no more units could be maintained, Senator Pearce replied on October 7th suggesting that volunteers for the railway service should be called from the A.I.F. oversea. This was the first time that Australia refused any such request. The British Government, however, on October 10th asked if the refusal could be reconsidered in view of the fact that the railway-men need not be fit for other services. The Australian Government therefore agreed to raise a section "R.O.D."<sup>73</sup> (three officers and 266 men). A call was made on the railways of all the states, and so keen was the response that on December 9th the Australian Government offered three more railway sections. The need was emphasised by a cable in December, 1916, asking for these sections

as soon as formed, without waiting for whole to be ready, as their services urgently required in France.

Further, in January, 1917, the War Office, acting on a previous suggestion from Australia, asked Birdwood whether he would form additional railway companies from troops in France. Upon his promising one section, the Army Council pressed for others to be formed from troops unfit for general

<sup>72</sup> The offer was of either "three auxiliary mechanical transport companies, petrol lorries" or "two auxiliary mechanical transport omnibus companies." The War Council accepted the former.

<sup>73</sup> Railway Operating Division. The composition of a section at this time was: 1 captain, 2 subalterns, 102 traffic men, 42 guards, 115 running staff, 7 men for maintenance at sheds. Later this was changed to 3 officers, 54 men for maintenance and repair of locomotives, 19 for traffic control, clerks, and station-masters, and 193 for running staff.

service, and even asked the High Commissioner to use his influence, pointing out that there were such men available at the Australian dépôts on Salisbury Plain. This the High Commissioner was unable to do; but, though Birdwood was strongly against the raising of more units, so many railway-men were offering that an additional section was formed in February in Australia. Senator Pearce suggested that the Australian railway units should be kept together at the front, an arrangement which the War Office promised, when possible, to effect.

In the meanwhile three more flying squadrons had been raised<sup>74</sup>—the 2nd being offered by Australia on the 29th of July, 1916, the 3rd formed in Egypt during the year, and the 4th offered on October 2nd in response to a suggestion received from England.<sup>75</sup> All these squadrons were sent to the Western Front. In consequence of the nearness of Australia to the East, the War Office asked it to supply, besides the flying unit for Mesopotamia previously mentioned,<sup>76</sup> wireless troops (eventually expanded into an Australian and New Zealand squadron) for the same region; a signal squadron for the cavalry division serving there; and 450 nurses and 50 dispensers for the military hospitals in India, which were chiefly

<sup>74</sup> See *Vol. VIII* of this History (*The Australian Flying Corps*, by F. M. Cutlack), *Appendix No. 2*.

<sup>75</sup> In consequence of the appointment of a number of men of the A.I.F.—largely through the mediation of the Royal Colonial Institute—to commissions in the British Army, the Australian Government in January, 1916, decided to prohibit such transfers, men suitable for officers being urgently required in the A.I.F. The policy of the British Government was also against transfers from the British service to the Australian, and the rule was henceforth seldom relaxed. In July, however, the British Government asked (*see Vol. VIII*, p. 421) if this rule might be relaxed in order to permit the calling for 200 volunteers from the A.I.F. for commissions as air-pilots in the Royal Flying Corps. This request was urged "in view of the exceptionally good work which has been done in the Royal Flying Corps by Australian-born officers, and the fact that the Australian temperament is specially suited to the flying service." (Major-General the Rt. Hon. J. E. B. Seely has stated that, during the war, the British Air Vice-Marshal Salmond gave it as his opinion that the Australian airmen were the best he knew; in 1926, when reminded of this Salmond said: "It is quite true, as I told you in 1917, that the Australians showed the most remarkable aptitude in the air for flying and air-fighting. Both on the Western Front and in the Eastern Theatre of War they had many squadrons of wonderful quality and achievement—one in particular was perhaps the finest squadron that ever took the air." Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Trenchard, on the other hand, stated in France during the war that the Canadians were, in his opinion, the best.) The Australian Government agreed, and 200 candidates were sent forward, of whom 133 obtained commissions in the British flying service. Some of these served with great distinction, but their achievements are outside the scope of these volumes.

<sup>76</sup> See p. 180. Its adventurous and somewhat tragic history, which ended at the siege of Kut, has been told in *Vol. VIII* of this series.



staffed by them.<sup>77</sup> For service in Egypt "two remount units" (1,678 strong, and chiefly composed of men over fifty years of age) were sent in 1915, the intention being that they should relieve the light horse from the duty of attending to horses in the remount dépôts at the base.<sup>78</sup> A light-car patrol<sup>79</sup> was also offered, and "gladly accepted" by Murray. No. 14 Australian General Hospital<sup>80</sup> was sent to Egypt, and four of the British hospitals at Salonica were staffed by Australian nurses.<sup>81</sup>

Except for the troops in the hospitals and dépôts, and the comparatively few and scattered units above enumerated, the Australian Imperial Force was to be found in six—eventually seven—fighting divisions, namely, the five infantry divisions for the Western Front, and the mounted division (or divisions) in Palestine.<sup>82</sup> The proportion of fighting troops to non-combatant units was very much greater than in any other British or dominion force, except that of New Zealand.

Neither Australia nor New Zealand at this stage provided any staff higher than those of the divisions. On Murray's suggestion a succession of young officers were now being attached to the staffs of the corps, divisions, and brigades for at least a month's experience and trial as "learners"; and those Duntroon graduates who had acquired experience with their regiments, and had survived, were being withdrawn from the fighting units and appointed to junior positions on the staff. But these were all very young, and the difficulty of

<sup>77</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 697. Of the 450 nurses, some were transferred to Salonica and others to the Western Front. This left 320 Australian nurses in India (in October, 1918). The British nurses there then numbered 200. The Mesopotamia hospitals were, however, staffed by the British. An account of the service of Australian nurses in India is included in the history of the A. and N.Z. Wireless Signal Squadron, *With Horse and Morse in Mesopotamia*, by E. K. Burke.

<sup>78</sup> The Egyptian authorities, however, favoured the employment of natives at much lower cost. In March, 1916, the units were reduced to a single section, the balance of the men being absorbed into other units or returned to Australia.

<sup>79</sup> A brief account of this is given in *Appendix No. 2*.

<sup>80</sup> Besides Nos. 1, 2, and 3 General Hospitals, No. 10 was sent to England but broken up. No. 14 went to Egypt. The other general hospitals up to No. 16 were in Australia (for a photograph of No. 11, see Vol. XII, plate 738). Nos. 1-6 Auxiliary Hospitals and Nos. 1-5 Convalescent Homes were sent overseas or organised abroad; in Australia were Nos. 7-28 Auxiliary Hospitals, Nos. 6-8 Convalescent Homes, and a number of other military hospitals. Of other than general hospitals, 12 were for tubercular cases, 4 mental, 6 venereal, 6 infectious, and 17 convalescent homes.

<sup>81</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 684.

<sup>82</sup> The mounted divisions included New Zealanders and some French troops, as follows:—*Anzac Mounted Division*—1st and 2nd Light Horse Brigades and New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade; *Australian Mounted Division*—3rd, 4th, and 5th Light Horse Brigades, and one regiment of Spahis and Chasseurs d'Afrique. The Australian Mounted Division was so constituted only towards the end of the war (see Vol. VII, pp. 639-40).



furnishing even the divisional staffs apparently precluded any suggestion at this stage that either of the corps staffs should be formally maintained by Australia or New Zealand. They therefore remained British units; but the arrangement was not satisfactory. It is true that Birdwood from the first obtained the appointment on his staff of a few Australian officers,<sup>83</sup> and gradually increased the number until by 1917 the staff of the I Anzac Corps was mainly Australian;<sup>84</sup> but Godley, though his attitude towards the Australian Government was always correct and even cordial, never conceived it to be his duty to afford representation on his staff, except in a few minor offices, either to Australians or New Zealanders, with the result that in II Anzac there existed always a certain not unnatural bitterness in the relations between the corps staff and its oversea divisions.<sup>85</sup> It was undoubtedly due to the width of Birdwood's sympathies that, though varying much in intensity, the sentiment towards himself, whether as commander of the I Anzac Corps or of the A.I.F., was always favourable. But not until September, 1916, was he formally confirmed in the latter command, although he had long since exercised its powers. The Minister for Defence, advised in these matters largely by Colonel Dodds, was by no means certain that the administration of the light horse in Sinai should be included among the duties of an active commander on the Western Front. Senator Pearce accordingly telegraphed to Birdwood on July 12th, asking whether he thought the powers of G.O.C., A.I.F., should be conferred on him, Godley, and Chauvel, or on him and Chauvel, and adding—"it seems desirable that authority should be conferred . . . on Chauvel for the Mounted Division." Birdwood, however, advised by White, replied that he had delegated to Chauvel powers sufficient for the administration of the A.I.F. in Egypt. It was obviously desirable that, if possible, the A.I.F. should be one service with identical rules governing pay, promotion, punishment, and other conditions of the soldier's life.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Most of the clerks were Australian.

<sup>84</sup> The corps headquarters signal sections, however, remained British.

<sup>85</sup> The same feeling developed in a more marked degree in Palestine, where—not from lack of suitable Australians, and in spite of the fact that most of their troops were always Australian—the staffs of the Desert Mounted Corps and Australian Mounted Division were allowed to remain British units.

<sup>86</sup> See, however, *Vol. VII*, pp. 192-3.

Consequently on the 14th of September, 1916, the appointment of G.O.C., A.I.F., was definitely conferred upon Birdwood, and throughout the war he remained the administrative commander-in-chief of the A.I.F., exercising his control through a small but very efficient special staff<sup>87</sup> at his French headquarters in touch with the commandant of the administrative offices in London. As from the birth of the force, the chief adviser of the G.O.C. (in all matters except those of personal detail, routine, and procedure) was White, who continued to control, far more than any other man, the development of the A.I.F. Charged with keeping touch with the London office was Colonel Griffiths, whose great knowledge of procedure and transparent fairness made smooth the relations with London as long as he was concerned with them. But though his course of action was thus to a large extent determined for him, it was Birdwood who had to carry it out, sometimes—where he was convinced that the interests of Australia demanded it—facing the formidable opposition of his own seniors at G.H.Q. This Birdwood never hesitated to do, despite the fact that he was an officer in the British service, and might thereby be imperilling his future. His insistence more than once brought upon him the marked displeasure of powerful superiors, including the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig. So far as Australia was concerned, his control was unquestioned until the last months of the war, when his acceptance of a command outside the A.I.F. would have brought it to a termination (though such was not his desire) had not the Armistice intervened. Centralised though the system was, the ill-effects of this were felt only in Egypt, and it had certain great advantages. It is true that Birdwood, as has previously been said,<sup>88</sup> did not possess the special mind of an organiser; but he was able safely to rely upon those strangely indefinite, yet invaluable, qualities of character which give men the power of leadership. Discussing his administration, one of his staff said during the war:

He chose the men whom he thought competent, and then left them absolutely to themselves in running their departments. He never wanted to know how White or we others did our work—he wanted to

<sup>87</sup> Already, at Anzac, Major Griffiths had been attached to Birdwood's staff for similar duty (see *Vol. II*, p. 418).

<sup>88</sup> See *Vol. I*, 1st edn., pp. 119-122.

know the results, of course, . . . but from the first he has never worried about the details in the least degree. . . . Ever since he was a subaltern he has always done his work in the same way, making you puzzle how he does it—sitting reading the newspapers for hours each morning, busying himself about getting a neat set of gardens going; and he has always had the same result. . . . Men were devoted to him.<sup>89</sup> He has a remarkable way of getting through a great deal of work. . . . Lord K. chose Birdwood (for the command of the Australians and New Zealanders) because he knew that he went among men as a man.

Birdwood's administration was actually carried out in a large measure by White, and at a later stage by Colonel Dodds. But it was because he was personally present with the troops in the field, and known to be sympathetic, scrupulously fair, and solely anxious to do what was right, that he had the confidence of the A.I.F. Of the general advantages resulting from the adoption of this system, probably the two greatest were: first, that it ruled out all possible rivalry for the supreme control; second—partly through Birdwood's fortune in having throughout the war the support in Australia of Senator Pearce, an excellent administrator and a loyal and honorable chief—that the A.I.F. enjoyed an almost complete freedom from personal jealousies and from the evils of social influence or political control. This desirable condition, which existed in few, if any, other military administrations, was undoubtedly the reason for the rapid emergence of the fine set of leaders—both staff and regimental—who were responsible for making the A.I.F. the efficient instrument which it admittedly became.

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<sup>89</sup> Speaking of one of Birdwood's previous commands, the same officer said: "When he went to the Kohat Brigade, part of the Indian Frontier Field Force, who thought a very great deal of themselves, it was exactly the same. He had been Military Secretary, and, when Kitchener put this 'Simla darling' (as most people would consider him) into the command of that brigade, he was, I think, junior to every commanding officer in it, . . . you may guess the sort of popularity with which his appointment was received.

"He went there. He did just as he does here—attended to his garden, read the paper; and at the end of three months there was not an officer or man in the brigade who didn't swear by him."

## CHAPTER VII

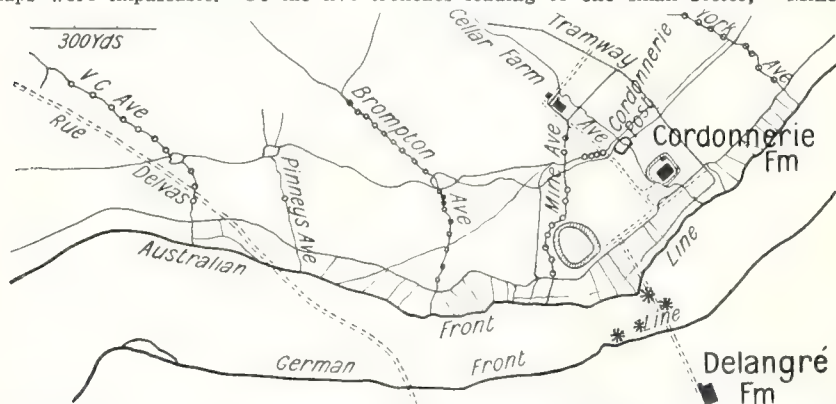
### THE FIRST FIGHTING IN FRANCE

At the time when the I Anzac Corps entered the line in France the Germans still possessed the initiative. It followed that in the mind of every commander and staff officer on the Allied side there was always present the anxiety lest his front should be the next to be attacked. In spite of their deep commitment at Verdun, the Germans were keeping the British Army busy during April and May with sharp assaults upon the Canadians at Ypres and on the British near Loos and at Vimy. Birdwood and the other Anzac commanders were therefore in constant apprehension that their line might at any moment be subject to a similar attack, delivered with the purpose of hindering the Allies from preparing a counter-offensive to that at Verdun.

The first duty of this, as of all other, corps was to prepare a scheme of defence in accordance with the principle then recently adopted—that of garrisoning the front line with comparatively few troops, and keeping as many as possible in rear as “mobile reserves.”<sup>1</sup> This would mean the holding of the front line, not continuously, but at “a series of . . . defended localities,” situated as far as possible at the heads of the communication trenches. To troops and staff accustomed to the elaborate fortifications of Anzac, however, the defences at Armentières appeared dangerously defective.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These instructions were issued by General White on June 7.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the majority of the communication avenues shown on the trench-maps were impassable. Of the five trenches leading to one small sector, “Mine”



and “Brompton” Avenues were both useless, being half-full of mud and water. “V.C.” and “Cellar Farm” Avenues were both useful trenches (although the former required extending and the latter had been marked down by the enemy as a good target); “York Avenue” was impassable.



It was therefore determined that, to ensure immediate security, the front breastwork must at once be strengthened until it was at least seven feet in height and twelve in breadth throughout. The reclaiming of the waterlogged communication trenches must also be hastened, others constructed or lengthened, and the reserve line thickened and completed. It was considered that, until many of these works had been carried out, a German attack could be securely met only by holding the line in the old fashion, with a strong garrison all along the front. The old garrison was therefore maintained and new works were at once begun.<sup>3</sup>

The plans for this work were soon to be greatly influenced by the course of operations. The British front was then perhaps more than usually expectant of an attempt by the enemy, and especially of a gas attack. A warning had been issued by the meteorologists<sup>4</sup> that during the approaching season the wind usually set from the direction of the enemy's trenches; moreover, on April 26th there had come over near Ypres two Polish deserters, who reported that gas cylinders had been installed behind the parapet in their sector, and were to be used almost immediately.<sup>5</sup> The Anzac divisions had had no experience of gas, except in the test behind the lines, and, like most other troops, dreaded its possible use against them.

The result of this nervousness was a series of false alarms. Shortly after dusk on April 26th a violent bombardment was heard, evidently directed against part of the 17th British Division, then north-east of Armentières. In the course of this, the enemy laid down a heavy barrage of "tear-gas" shells in rear of part of the British line, which (as was afterwards learnt) he unsuccessfully attempted to raid. The sweet aroma of this gas,<sup>6</sup> floating south-westwards behind the

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<sup>3</sup> There was, however, this difference from the conditions of Gallipoli—that no part of the resting division (until May 20, the New Zealand Division) was called on to participate.

<sup>4</sup> Small meteorological sections were distributed throughout the British Expeditionary Force. This was one of the expert services not included in the A.I.F.

<sup>5</sup> A gas-cloud was duly emitted by the Germans on April 30, but inflicted little harm.

<sup>6</sup> Not unlike that of hyacinth.

Anzac line, perplexed the drivers in the horse-lines and men in billets around Erquinghem and Bac St. Maur, but it inflicted no harm and caused no deep apprehension. The next night, however, shortly before ten o'clock, a warning of gas was received by the 2nd Division from the 17th. In the front line gas-gongs and horns were sounded, and an officer of the 1st Battalion (1st Division), apparently misunderstanding the orders for such a case, fired a "G.A.S." signal-rocket. The 5th Field Artillery Brigade at once opened on the enemy's parapet in accordance with its standing orders, the theory then being that the bursting shells would help to dissipate the cloud. Meanwhile the divisional staffs had telephoned to brigades and battalions, each of which reported that there was no gas in their area. The artillery was therefore stopped after having fired for an hour. The alarm had been a false one, but it had one interesting effect. The infantry of the 2nd Division for the first time saw a "barrage" placed by its own artillery upon the enemy parapet. Along the whole line the troops were delighted with the spectacle, and from that night was dated the sure reliance of this division's infantry upon their own gunners. Even the artillery staff, which had been somewhat anxious concerning the probable performance of their almost untrained howitzer batteries, was reassured by the night's work. "At least we didn't hit our own trenches—I suppose that's something," commented Brigadier-General George Johnston, the commander of the 2nd Division's artillery.

On several other nights, gas alarms originating far up the line passed down the front, and were repeated by sounding gongs and bleating strombus horns; but as a matter of fact gas in cloud form, emitted from cylinders, was never used directly against an Australian division. Seven weeks after these events 5 officers and 40 men, detached from the 25th Battalion, were in the line near Messines, when the Germans made one of their last attempts to inflict casualties by this method. On that occasion the gas cloud was met quite coolly by all troops on the spot, and there is no record of any

casualties from gas among the Australian detachment.<sup>7</sup> But when, after the gas had passed over the trenches directly subject to the attack, it was carried southwards by the wind along the valley of the Lys and through the area behind the Anzac front, ten miles away, it was still strong enough to cause the horses in the artillery waggon-lines to cough, and many of the men to vomit. Most troops wore their helmets for an hour, but there were no serious casualties among them.<sup>8</sup> Green clover and some of the vegetable crops were afterwards found to be "nipped." There were standing orders for the warning of the civil inhabitants: at Fleurbaix the brigade staff was to inform the *Maire*, in whose house the brigadier was billeted. At Sailly—



The C.R.E. will warn M. Becu, the proprietor of his billet, who will warn the Vicar, who will have the bell of the girls' school in the Estaires road rung.

At Bac St. Maur—

A cyclist from the pioneer battalion will call the doorkeeper at M. Sablon's factory, who will at once start the steam siren.

In Nouveau Monde and Estaires the church bells were to be rung. Whether these precautions were duly carried out is not recorded; according to one authority two young children died in the Anzac area. On several later occasions

<sup>7</sup> Two of the Australians, however, were killed by the bombardment. This attack occurred on the night of June 16. The gas used included chlorine, but with a large proportion of phosgene, and caused some 400 casualties among the British troops, of which probably about a tenth were deaths. The gas was sent out in two clouds—the first smoke, probably with little gas; the second, after an interval, strong gas. The object of this procedure was to cause the men to lay aside their helmets after the first cloud, imagining that the attack was past.

<sup>8</sup> Men were usually most careful never to be without their gas-helmets, since the absence of a helmet might at any time mean certain death. One cyclist, however, who had forgotten to carry his, rode off in haste to find it, and the heavy breathing induced by the exertion caused him to consume so much gas that he suffered more seriously than others.

cloud-gas was discharged by British special-service troops from the Anzac lines.<sup>9</sup> This ended the very limited experience of the Anzac troops in that dreaded, but least dangerous, branch of gas-warfare. Fighting first came to Australian troops in France, not in the form of gas attack, but in those sharp and sudden minor actions, involving only a company or two at a time, which sooner or later befell most units holding even a quiet line in France.

The chief basis which the high command on either side possessed for estimating the probable intention of the enemy was an accurate knowledge of the disposition of his troops—in technical language, his “order of battle.” If it was possible to discover where the enemy’s divisions were, and whether they were increasing in number opposite certain parts of the front and decreasing elsewhere, his plans could be forejudged with fair accuracy. On the other hand, no commander-in-chief could be free from anxiety if, for any length of time, he “lost sight of” an important part of the enemy’s force. The intelligence staff therefore exerted a constant pressure upon their agents behind the opponent’s line to secure particulars of all divisions resting or moving in the back areas, and upon the commanders of front-line troops to secure “identifications” of enemy units holding the actual trenches. For this reason any peculiarities of uniform observed in the enemy’s lines were to be at once reported. The cap, buttons, shoulder straps, and badges of any opponent found dead in No-Man’s Land, or the papers or letters in his pockets, were to be brought in for examination. But the surest method of identification was to bring back some of the enemy as prisoners, either by cutting off his patrols in No-Man’s Land, or by simply going into his trenches and bringing back part of the garrison. The Canadians were understood to have started the practice of entering the enemy’s trenches by surprise, after having secretly cut through his barbed-wire. Both sides, however, had now learned the process, and, as surprise was becoming more difficult, the wire

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<sup>9</sup> See p. 271 and note 34 on p. 326.



was generally first torn up by trench-mortar and artillery bombardment, and the raid itself covered by a heavy curtain of shell-fire.

It had been hoped that the formation of a second Anzac corps, and the transfer of the first to France, might remain for some time secret, or at least a puzzle to the enemy. It is true that many clues were accidentally given to him. Early in April a newspaper in Marseilles published a photograph of Australian troops marching through that city. A London paper in mid-April openly interpreted a phrase in a French *communiqué* as a statement that Anzac troops had been transferred to the Western Front; another, under the heading "Anzacs in France," published Birdwood's advice to the troops upon the occasion of that transfer. On April 25th General Godley cabled from Egypt to Australia: "Greetings from II Anzac Corps," and the message, after being published in the Australian papers, was cabled to the London *Times*. In the normal course some, if not all, of this evidence, along with all that obtained at the front, would be carefully sifted by the German intelligence staff; the enemy must therefore have been on the lookout for the appearance of an Anzac corps in France. It is now known<sup>10</sup> that the presence of an Australian division behind the lines at St. Pol had been reported, presumably by German agents in the French back area, on April 1st. The French and British staffs were aware that the current gossip of the inhabitants behind the front became known to the German High Command about a week later, this being apparently the time necessary for the passage of the agents' reports through Holland or Switzerland.<sup>11</sup> The German agents do not appear to have specified in their first report which division was referred to, but by April 10th the 2nd had been located in reserve west of Lille. Anzac troops were easily recognisable, since even in the front area some of them wore felt hats, the supply of steel helmets being still insufficient. It is possible that German observers who, like the Australians,

<sup>10</sup> Through the courtesy of the *Reichsarchiv*.

<sup>11</sup> No Australian division was at St. Pol, but the 2nd had just arrived at Aire, 18 miles distant.

could daily see a certain number of their opponents moving about the back area,<sup>12</sup> noted that some of the troops now opposed to them wore felt hats. At any rate the 1st Division had not been in the trenches a week, when, on April 23rd, there appeared on the enemy's parapet opposite the 2nd Battalion a signal lamp which flashed in Morse code: "Australians go home." "Go . . . in morning." "You will be dead in the morning." This was possibly an attempt to confirm a suspicion, and should have been answered carefully, if at all. The carrying on of informal conversation with the enemy was strongly discouraged by the British High Command.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, as usually happened on such occasions, some of the 2nd flashed back: "Why?" The enemy's fluency was probably limited to prepared sentences, for he replied feebly: "We are good."<sup>14</sup> Whatever the meaning of these signals, the position of the divisions and their composition does not appear to have been ascertained with sufficient definiteness to satisfy the German staff. At the same time the British staff was becoming anxious to identify the German troops in the line south-east of Armentières, no certain evidence having been received since the night of April 6th, when the three Germans entered the trenches of the 34th Division.<sup>15</sup> The Anzac troops, however, were only then receiving the medium trench-mortars, which were largely relied upon in trench-raids, and the staffs were not very anxious to undertake these set enterprises until their troops had more experience. Orders were accordingly issued by brigade and battalion commanders that special efforts must be made by patrols to cut off and capture enemy scouts.

The absence of trench-mortars had been responsible for harassing losses in some of the salients, especially in that

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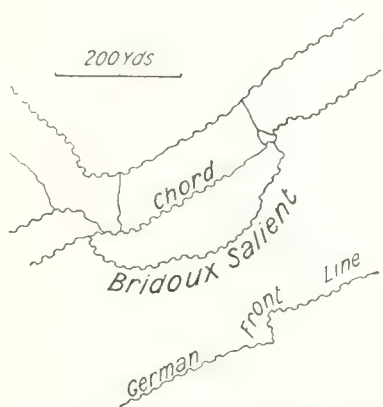
<sup>12</sup> The Australian observers, for example, about this time were beginning to report the appearance in and behind the enemy's line of a few men wearing steel helmets, indicating that the Germans also were beginning to provide their men with this form of protection.

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 4 on p. 120.

<sup>14</sup> These signals continued from 9 p.m. until 1 a.m.

<sup>15</sup> See p. 130. At that date the enemy's line was held by the 24th (Saxon) Division of the XIX (Saxon) Corps, opposite Armentières; and by the 50th Reserve (Prussian) and 6th Bavarian Reserve Divisions farther south.

near Le Bridoux, a mile south-east of Bois Grenier, held by part of the 5th (New South Wales) Infantry Brigade. Here for a length of some 500 yards the front line took a bow-shaped curve towards the enemy, the central point of the projection being 140 yards in advance of the general alignment of the British front and 125 yards from the nearest German trench. Across the rear of the salient, as was frequently done in such cases, had been constructed a "chord" line, forming as it



were the string of the bow, and providing a line of defence in case the salient were lost. The chord-line lay, at its centre, some 100 yards in rear of the front line, with open grassland between.

About the end of April this salient began to be intermittently bombarded by the German guns. On the 28th twenty high-explosive shells landed on the parapet, breaking it in three places. On April 30th both front and chord lines were again shelled, two men being killed and four wounded. On May 1st both lines were again continually under slow fire from heavy guns, and on the 3rd they were heavily shelled.

On the night of May 1st the 20th Battalion relieved the 18th in this sector; and at this juncture the arrival of the new light trench-mortar battery of the 5th Infantry Brigade suggested a suitable means for retaliating upon the enemy. As a matter of fact, during the occupation of this sector by the 34th Division, the Stokes mortars had been employed,<sup>16</sup> apparently from this salient. Accordingly on May 3rd Major Fitz-Gerald of the 20th telephoned to the brigade-major asking

<sup>16</sup> "On the 13th March, Stokes 3-inch mortars were used for the first time, and, judging from the language used by the Boche, the result was satisfactory." (*The Thirty-fourth Division*, by Lieutenant-Colonel J. Shakespear, p. 18.) It is not stated where the mortars were emplaced, but there was a tradition in the sector that they had been fired from the Bridoux Salient. This was, of course, before the order of April 18 restricting their use.

whether the Stokes guns could be sent up to suppress the enemy's mortars. Most important restrictions, however, had by special order of the Commander-in-Chief recently been placed upon the firing both of medium and light trench-mortars. Valuable secrets were involved,<sup>17</sup> and it was hoped that these could be preserved from the enemy until the coming Allied offensive. It had accordingly been decided to permit their use only under restricted conditions, which were modified by order received from G.H.Q. on April 18th, as follows:

Secret. . . . Stokes mortars, and the Newton fuse with 2-inch mortars, must be employed to some extent in normal trench warfare. The fact remains, however, that we hope to achieve great results from exploiting these inventions in the form of a surprise in offensive operations, and that the measure of our success will depend, to a great extent, on the novelty of their employment.

For these reasons the principal attributes of these weapons will not be disclosed prior to their use in large operations. These attributes are:—

3-inch Stokes mortars—Rapidity of fire.  
Newton fuse—Use in wire cutting.

The rate of fire of 3-inch Stokes mortars should not exceed that obtainable by 3.7 inch or 4-inch mortars except in special circumstances, such as an enemy attack.

Special care will be taken to prevent any of the 3-inch Stokes mortars being captured by the enemy. When employed in close proximity to the front line, they will be withdrawn to a support line after use.

L. E. KIGGELL, Lieut.-General,  
Chief of the General Staff.

This order had, at the time, been duly circulated to the brigade staffs, with special warnings, but the brigade-major of the 5th Brigade had not mentioned it to his brigadier (General Holmes) or to the battalions, or, apparently, to all the officers of the brigade's trench-mortar battery.<sup>18</sup> The commander of the battery, however, was well aware that the guns were to be safeguarded in every possible way and brought back to the support line after being fired.

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<sup>17</sup> Not only was the Stokes gun secret, but also the Newton fuse, a device used with medium trench-mortars to explode the bombs, whether "landing" head or tail downwards or on their sides.

<sup>18</sup> The evidence on the last point is divided.



The brigade-major decided to send two Stokes mortars to the 20th Battalion. As these could not range on the desired target unless fired from the front line, it would be necessary to send them into the actual salient. The trench-mortar officer was told that he must fire only at a slow rate, and on the morning of May 4th they were taken to the front by two officers and the guns' crews, and about midday were ranged on to the enemy's position, as also was one of the medium trench-mortars. The enemy's wire and parapet were damaged, and the shooting was then temporarily stopped, it being desired to use the mortars only if the enemy opened fire with his mine-throwers. The men of the batteries were withdrawn to quarters not far from the support line, so that they could be summoned quickly. After the shooting the Germans fired a hundred rounds of high-explosive shell into salient and chord-line, breaking the breastworks and inflicting a few casualties; they renewed the bombardment in the evening with heavy howitzers.

The nature of the enemy's shelling on May 1st had caused the artillery commander in that sector—Lieutenant-Colonel Cohen<sup>19</sup> of the 6th Brigade, A.F.A.—to suspect that the Germans were ranging their guns on the Bridoux Salient, with the intention of attacking it. He had consequently held a special conference of his battery commanders, borrowed the 105th Howitzer Battery from the neighbouring brigade, and arranged a particular scheme of defence to be brought into operation, if necessary, by the code message—"Open Bridoux." The infantry, however, does not appear to have been specially apprehensive of attack.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Colonel H. E. Cohen, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 6th A.F.A. Bde., 1915/19. Solicitor and company director; of Malvern, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 25 Nov., 1881.

<sup>20</sup> It was recalled afterwards that infantry patrols on May 3 and 4 had found the barbed-wire in front of the salient badly torn about by the shelling, and on the second night there was found, 50 yards in advance of the Australian entanglement, a stake driven into the earth with a wire attached to it, leading to the German lines. The patrol pulled the wire and broke it, whereupon several rockets were sent up from the enemy trench. During the morning of May 5 a German aeroplane, flying over the salient, dropped a small red balloon. Brigade headquarters conjectured that this might mean that the wind currents were being tested for a gas attack. The anti-aircraft gunners noted that the enemy's aeroplanes were especially persistent this day over that part of the area, and that they would not withdraw when fired at.

Next day, May 5th, a certain number of shells fell in the salient, and the Australians retaliated with a few rounds from their medium trench-mortars and Stokes guns. It was thought that the latter had stung the enemy, for he immediately turned a battery of field-guns on to the northern corner of the salient, from which they had been firing. Enemy aeroplanes were several times overhead, but the afternoon ended peacefully, hardly a shot breaking the silence. It was the time for a normal relief of the front-line company (Captain Ferguson's)<sup>21</sup> in the salient by a company (Major Paul's)<sup>22</sup> from reserve, and as soon as darkness fell the relieving platoons began to file up the communication trenches.

The first of Major Paul's platoons was just reaching the salient when, at 7.40 p.m.,<sup>23</sup> four shells—a salvo from the German field-guns—came over in quick succession. They were followed at once by the scream and burst of both light and heavy shells, descending so thickly that the region was immediately drowned in the continuous deafening uproar of the explosions. Captain Ferguson, whose company was holding the front line, ran towards the S.O.S. rockets, which were laid ready for firing only ten yards from his shelter, but was three times blown over by the blast of a shell in endeavouring to reach them. The bombardment was falling also upon the chord-line and the communication trenches ("Safety Alley" and "Queer Street"). At the headquarters of the 20th Battalion, in the sandbag shelters known as "The White City," about 600 yards in rear, the acetylene lamp was extinguished by the concussion of a shell; it was twice re-lit, and immediately went out again. Stepping outside, the headquarters' officers could hear the shells bursting in the salient like a hurricane, and the air seemed alive with whining fragments of metal. It was

<sup>21</sup> Capt. A. G. Ferguson, 20th Bn. University student; of Sydney; b. Woollahra, N.S.W., 10 Nov., 1892. Killed in action, 14 June, 1916.

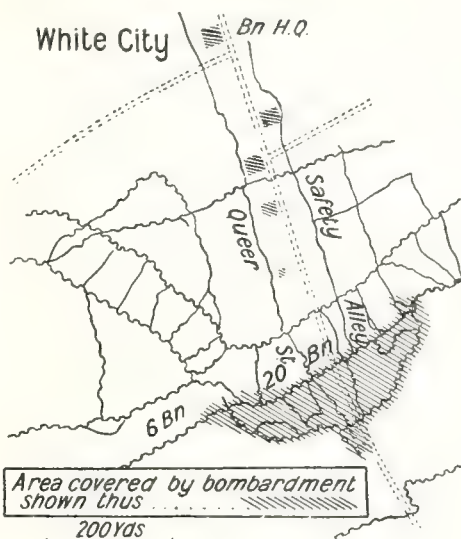
<sup>22</sup> Lieut.-Col. H. Paul. Commanded 49th Bn., 1917/18. Auctioneer; of Bathurst, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, 11 April, 1878. Accidentally killed, 13 Oct., 1922.

<sup>23</sup> In the German records the hour appears as 9.40, the enemy time (mid-European *plus* one hour of "daylight-saving") being then two hours in advance of the British. The British and French advanced their clocks an hour on June 14.

in everyone's mind that an offensive such as the enemy had recently launched against the Canadians was being aimed at the Australians. The two green rockets calling for artillery support were immediately fired, and, several minutes<sup>24</sup> after the German salvo which started the bombardment, the group of batteries covering that sector was playing all

its guns on the German parapet. The news was telegraphed to the headquarters of the 2nd Division and of the army corps, and there also the staffs, listening anxiously to the continuous rumble of the guns, assumed that the Germans were delivering an extensive attack.

From the very commencement not a word of communication could be obtained from the Bridoux Salient. The enemy's bombardment had cut all telephone lines to that region, and had torn down and blocked both the communication "trenches." A false report of German gas was received from the neighbouring brigade on the north, and was presently contradicted. In accordance with the defence scheme, first one reserve battalion and then both were ordered to move from their "close" billets to the Bois Grenier line of reserve defences. At 8.15 the 20th Battalion Headquarters reported that it could hear to its front the rattle of rifle-fire. Two minutes later messages came from the 2nd Brigade, holding the front immediately south of the bombarded area, that the enemy now appeared to be concentrating his fire upon the flank of that brigade. At 8.15 the unit to the north of the



<sup>24</sup> Australian accounts say five minutes. German accounts state that this fire began in three minutes and developed into full barrage in eight to ten minutes, but that the shells all burst too high and caused no loss in the forward area.

20th, and at 8.25 that on its south, stated that the enemy could be seen leaving his trenches in that sector. The fire of the artillery was accordingly concentrated upon this front.<sup>25</sup> The German bombardment continued without respite until 8.45, when it was reported to be decreasing on the salient, but increasing upon its flanks. Ten minutes later it slackened. At 9.10 two red rockets were sent up from the enemy's line, and he began to fire with shrapnel along the whole parapet.

At 9.30 the German guns ceased, and for the first time it became possible to send men from battalion headquarters and the reserves into the salient. The intelligence officer of the 20th Battalion, Lieutenant McCall,<sup>26</sup> was one of the first to make his way thither, and to bring back news that, although the breastworks had in many places been torn down by the bombardment, and the shelters destroyed, the line was still in Australian hands. The survivors of the garrison had mostly sought shelter to the flanks, and had since re-occupied the shattered line. Major Paul's company and a portion of the 18th Battalion were sent up to rebuild the parapet and other works, if possible, before daylight. The casualties in the bombardment had been heavy—apparently about 100—but they could not yet be exactly ascertained.

In the morning a short report of the incident duly reached G.H.Q. About the same time the discovery in the Australian trench of a few German hand-bombs, and the report of one or two men in the salient that they had seen some of the enemy enter it,<sup>27</sup> proved that some Germans had crossed the parapet. Consequently the *communiqué* sent to London by G.H.Q. on the evening of May 6th included the following reference (which practically repeated the report from the 2nd Australian Division):

The enemy made a raid on and entered our trenches south-east of Armentières, after bombarding them. He was at once driven out.

<sup>25</sup> Two enfilading guns of the 10th Battery had apparently already been ordered to fire upon the open space between the Australian front and the chord-line—i.e., in rear of the actual front trench.

<sup>26</sup> Major J. J. L. McCall, D.S.O. G.S.O.(3), 2nd Aust. Div., 1917/18. Duntroon graduate; of Sydney; b. Newcastle, N.S.W., 8 May, 1894.

<sup>27</sup> One had been wounded by a German officer with a revolver.



About the same time a sharp shock was received at corps headquarters. The German daily *communiqué* taken in by wireless at the headquarters of General Plumer, Second British Army, stated:

*Western Theatre of War.*—To the south-east and south of Armén-tières some operations carried out by our patrols were successful. Some prisoners were captured and two machine-guns and two mine-throwers were taken.

General Plumer at once referred this report to Birdwood's headquarters, asking whether it was true, and, if so, why he had not previously been informed. As a matter of fact, although the truth had since early morning been suspected by the staff of the brigade and battalion involved, and was much more serious than the German *communiqué* at first glance indicated, these suspicions had not been transmitted by the staff of the 2nd Division to Birdwood's headquarters; the first inkling obtained by the corps staff was when General White, inspecting the trenches of a neighbouring brigade during the morning, heard rumours that the enemy had entered the Bridoux Salient and captured two Stokes guns. About the same time two of Birdwood's intelligence staff, Major Butler and Lieutenant Herbertson,<sup>28</sup> visiting the 20th Battalion in its battered trenches, found that the enemy had undoubtedly entered the salient, that several infantrymen were missing, and that the two Stokes guns, which had been used during the afternoon and had afterwards been seen lying dismantled outside a shelter in the front line, were nowhere to be found. There was still a chance that both guns and men might be lying covered by débris with which the salient was still littered; and the divisional staff was apparently waiting until the facts were quite certain before it made a further report. Such failures instantly to pass on important but unpalatable information were due, sometimes to a false exhibition of *esprit de corps*, sometimes to a lack of moral courage. They always tended to lead, as on this occasion, to highly mortifying results.

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<sup>28</sup> Capt. J. J. W. Herbertson, O.B.E.; Honourable Artillery Company. Intelligence officer, 1 Anzac Corps, 1916/18. Schoolmaster; of Oxford, Eng.; b. Liverpool, Eng., 29 Dec., 1883.

The events which had happened in the Bridoux Salient after the German bombardment had cut it off from the rest of the force were being painfully pieced together by officers of the 20th Battalion. The truth was eventually discovered to be as follows. The bombardment had descended so suddenly that there was little opportunity for taking precautionary measures, even if a local defence scheme had been clearly laid down and understood, which it was not. The local scheme, however, was clear on at least one main point—it repeated the general principle laid down in the corps scheme, that the front line was to be held at all costs; it made no mention of provision for withdrawing the garrison temporarily to the flanks during bombardment. Captain Ferguson and his officers undoubtedly believed that it was their duty to keep the men at their usual posts. When the bombardment descended, some of the men crouched close beneath the parapet; others sheltered in the “dugouts” beneath or behind it; in the northern half, which was the more shattered, most of those who were not killed began at an early stage to withdraw to the flank on their own initiative. In the southern half the breastwork was without parados, entirely open to the rear, and the men’s backs were thus unprotected from the side-slash of the shells which were pouring in chiefly from the flanks. The dugout containing the store of Very lights was destroyed early in the bombardment, but one junior officer, Lieutenant Connor,<sup>29</sup> having a certain number available, continued to throw them from the exposed southern end of the salient until he was hit through the back by a shell-splinter. Although his breath was coming and going through the wound (of which he died next day), he continued to speak cheerfully to his men. Lieutenant Blanchard,<sup>30</sup> the battalion bombing officer, went round to see that his men were at their posts, and remained with some of them at the actual apex of the salient. At the northern

<sup>29</sup> Lieut. J. W. Connor, 20th Bn. Linotype operator; of Warragul, Vic., and Albury, N.S.W.; b. Geelong, Vic., 17 April, 1873. Died of wounds, 6 May, 1916.

<sup>30</sup> Capt. N. G. Blanchard, 20th Bn. Storeman; of Willoughby, N.S.W.; b. Kiama, N.S.W., 18 June, 1893.

end, Captain Hosking,<sup>31</sup> seeing some Lewis gunners retiring from its apex, sent them back, but the shell-fire was so heavy that they again withdrew to an emplacement at the northern end and stayed there looking out across the front. Finding that others were withdrawing, Hosking, who had been sitting in the open door of a shelter, talking to the men inside, called "Come on boys, we've got to hold the line," and with a little urging led them back to the salient.

About this time a sudden change came over the action. The bombardment lulled, "as though the gunners were cleaning their guns." After a short interval it increased again: but during the lull, by the light of bursting shells, some of the few observers remaining caught a glimpse of a group of Germans, perhaps a dozen in number, running forward. Several other groups followed. Corporal Kearns,<sup>32</sup> at his post in the salient, fired at them, and an Australian machine-gun farther north could be heard in action. A few moments later, by the light of the shells, a party of the enemy was seen on the parapet. Almost unobserved, other parties got in near the northern and southern ends of the salient. One such party, led by an officer, came into the bay in which were Blanchard and his bombers, shot Blanchard through the shoulder and captured him and his men. Another party found a shelter in which were several wounded Australians, threw several bombs at the opening, and pulled out the man nearest the door, who had been badly wounded and could not walk. There was a scream, and he was apparently brained with a knobkerry.<sup>33</sup> The other men in the shelter thereupon surrendered. The enemy at once retired across No-Man's Land with his prisoners, of whom half were wounded, and with the two Stokes guns. He left no German dead, and there was at the time no evidence that he suffered any casualties. The 20th Battalion, on the other hand, lost 4 officers and 91 men killed or wounded, in addition to 11 prisoners; in neighbouring units, 25 men were killed or wounded.

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<sup>31</sup> Major A. K. Hosking, M.C.; 20th Bn. Engineer; of Wollongong, N.S.W.; b. Wollongong, 14 Oct., 1891. Killed in action, 20 Sept., 1917.

<sup>32</sup> Cpl. E. P. Kearns, M.M. (No. 603; 20th Bn.). Fitter and ironworker; of Leichhardt, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 1890. Killed in action, 3 Oct., 1918.

<sup>33</sup> A short club. One left behind by the Germans had a stiff steel spring for its handle, and a 2-lb. iron bolt for its head.



The enemy had thus apparently done precisely what he wanted. One of the captured men, upon his return several years later from Germany, said that the German intelligence officer, examining him after the raid, told him that its object was to secure the Stokes guns, and that the enemy had known exactly where they were. The regimental records in the *Reichsarchiv*, however, to which access has by the courtesy of its authorities been allowed,<sup>34</sup> definitely prove that this was not the case.

As full details are available of the German action in this raid and that of May 30, it seems worth while to give them at some length. The raid had been ordered on April 25 (that is, nine days before the Stokes guns were taken to the sector). Its primary object was to discover whether mining was in progress on this part of the Australian front, and, if so, to destroy the entrances to the galleries. The secondary object was to seize prisoners and booty. The raiders comprised two parties (each consisting of about 25 of the I/230th R.I.R. under a junior leader<sup>35</sup>) organised in blocking detachments, "booty detachments," and so forth, and twelve pioneers split up into small parties to carry out the demolition. Most of the men were to carry six bombs each, daggers, and electric torches, and the blocking parties eight bombs and revolvers. The supporting batteries were—two of heavy field-howitzers, two of light field-howitzers, and four of field-guns. The attack was also supported by three heavy trench-mortars (*ladungswerfer*—apparently throwing "aerial torpedoes"), four medium, and eleven light trench-mortars, and six bomb-throwers. The raiders were to wear no marks by which they themselves, if killed or captured, would be identified. When they were assembled ready to attack, the fact was to be notified to headquarters by the code message "Rations distributed." The arrangements, in fact, closely approximated to those employed in British raids. The German report states that the German bombardment began at 7.40, their opponents beginning to reply with light artillery-fire at 7.43. Five to seven minutes later this developed into a heavy barrage, but the Australian shrapnel was burst high and to the rear, "so that our own fire trenches scarcely suffered, no losses resulting."

The German raiders, who waited in dugouts until 8.15, leapt the parapet at 8.20 (precisely when the change in the nature of the bombardment was reported by the Australian infantry<sup>36</sup>), and, when about fifty yards from the British parapet, formed a general line. Both parties now came under fire from the Australian infantry, and five men were slightly wounded. The raiders replied by firing revolvers and throwing bombs as they advanced, crossed the British entanglement, which was completely destroyed, and entered the trenches. The blocking parties established barricades without interference. "In the trench itself were a comparatively large number of enemy dead—Lieutenant Bruns himself counted eight within a space of three

<sup>34</sup> See *Preface*, p. vii.

<sup>35</sup> Lieut. Bruns led one, Vizefeldwebel Ermertz the other.

<sup>36</sup> See pp. 199 and 203.



traverses. Individual enemy posts which offered resistance were overcome. An English<sup>37</sup> officer who fired and shot off lights while standing behind a loop-hole was wounded, disarmed, and taken prisoner by Ermertz's patrol. Some of the enemy garrison had crept into dugouts and attempted to offer resistance from them. Where these refused to come out at once on being challenged by the patrols, hand grenades were thrown into the dugouts. On the right wing Under-officer Gerwoll and Musketeer Plage observed a rifle grenade stand. They threw it over the trench and brought it back together with a prisoner. Musketeers Gopfert and Mai, belonging to the left patrol, captured two trench-mortars which were standing on the parados ready to fire, and had been abandoned by their crew. These were thrown over the parapet and brought back into our trenches. The rest of the raiders split up in the trenches and gathered booty of every description (equipment, letters, etc.)." Two minutes before the time to retire, the raiders were about to push forward "to the second trench" when a shout was heard: "The Pioneers are exploding a mine!" The leaders therefore ordered retirement. At 8.40 the leader (Captain Volkmann) reported that both infantry parties had returned, complete. By 9.10 most of the Pioneers also had reported. The artillery was therefore at once ordered to diminish its fire. At 9.47, the remaining pioneers having just reported, the artillery was ordered to cease fire. The heavy trench-mortars had fired 30 rounds, the medium 60 rounds, the light 398, and the bomb-throwers 411. The pioneers reported that, although the German artillery and trench-mortar fire had been well-placed, "No. 1" Australian trench had been found occupied and "No. 2" was apparently garrisoned in strength. The total loss among those raiding or supporting the raid was 4 killed and 15 wounded.

The story is completed by the statements of captured Australians, made upon their return from Germany after the war. They say that the wounded prisoners were treated at a German dressing-station, and then all were sent to Lille. As they passed through the streets of Haubourdin on their way to Lille headquarters, the French inhabitants tried to give them cigarettes and food-stuffs, but were severely handled by the German soldiers. In spite of kicks and of blows from rifle-butts, men and women shouted "Vive l'Australie!"<sup>38</sup> At Douai the prisoners were examined by officers of the German intelligence staff, and the enemy on that day definitely ascertained that the 2nd Australian Division was in the line south-east of Armentières, with the 1st Division on its right. The German reports further show that the captured Australians, when questioned by the enemy's intelligence officers as to the artillery and billets behind their lines, gave no

<sup>37</sup> To the Germans, British and Dominion troops were all "English."

<sup>38</sup> According to one prisoner the crowd at the railway station was so demonstrative that the Germans turned a fire-hose upon it.

information, but spoke of general matters such as the severity or otherwise of the German artillery fire, and the food they received.<sup>39</sup> It is remarkable that the German records of the actual operation contain no reference to the Stokes mortars other than that above-mentioned;<sup>40</sup> and a careful search, most courteously undertaken by the authorities of the *Reichsarchiv* for the benefit of this present account, leads to the conclusion that the Germans did not realise the importance of their capture. Indeed there is no sign that the "two mortars" were ever recognised by them as Stokes guns.

All this, however, did not alter the fact that the weapon, of which the secret was being so carefully guarded, had been captured from an Australian unit. The presence of the guns in the front line, after the Commander-in-Chief had specially enjoined that they should never be left there, and had explained the reason, obviously implied the grossest breach of orders. Some of the officers concerned were placed under arrest, and in the course of several inquiries and courts-martial it was found that, by order of an officer who was apparently unaware of the special precautions to be taken, the guns, after firing, had been left outside the bomb-store in the front line.<sup>41</sup> In the end the full responsibility was not sheeted home to any single officer. But such a miscarriage could only occur through a lack of the sense of

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<sup>39</sup> There is no question that the prisoners were sturdily determined to give away no intelligence of value. The only really safe course, however, and one permitted by the rules of war, was for a prisoner to refuse to give any information, except as to his name and number. Men captured in battle were usually under an intense strain and suffering from shock, and it was comparatively seldom that they absolutely refused to answer questions (*see, however, the case of the British officer cited in Vol. II, p. 670*). The majority endeavoured to fence with the examining officers, giving replies which they considered safe. The enemy—like the British—seems generally to have respected a man who would not speak.

<sup>40</sup> That is—that "two mortars" were taken. These guns would under normal circumstances be passed to the higher staffs for examination. If they had been identified, the unit capturing them would certainly have been congratulated, as was the 21st R.I.R. for having secured, on May 30, one Lewis gun. The capture was of no advantage, for the design of the Stokes gun was never fully adopted by the Germans. They had already devised a bomb similar in one important respect to that of the Stokes—that is, having the cartridge attached to the bomb itself; a bomb of this nature fell in the Ypres Salient during May, 1915. But they never imitated the device which gave to the Stokes gun its extraordinary rapidity of discharge—the firing of the bombs by the mere action of dropping them into the tube. The German bombs in question were used in a *rifled* mortar, a system which rendered impossible this method of discharge, but secured greater accuracy.

<sup>41</sup> It was ascertained that the senior trench-mortar officer had ordered the guns to be withdrawn to the support line after firing, but that he had not been present when they were employed on the second day; and that his junior, who had not been to a trench-mortar school and was apparently unaware of the special order, had then told the crews to leave the guns outside the front-line bomb-store ready for further use.

personal responsibility and a slackness in supervision almost amounting to a military crime—qualities which, if they were general in the A.I.F., would indicate a dangerous state of inefficiency. Birdwood and the Australian commanders, however, were almost more deeply impressed by the failure of an Australian brigade to keep the enemy out of its line, or at least to expel him vigorously as soon as the barrage lifted. If only three or four Germans had been discovered dead on the parapet or in No-Man's Land, a less serious view would probably have been taken of the action; but the enemy had apparently retired scot free. In sending a report to Plumer on May 7th Birdwood said:

I much regret what I cannot help considering to be the unsatisfactory results of this attack by the Germans, and I cannot sufficiently express regret for the loss of the two Stokes mortars, which is inexcusable.

Plumer, in forwarding the report to the Commander-in-Chief, added:

The loss of the two Stokes mortars is, as stated by the Corps Commander, inexcusable. . . . The two officers who were in charge of the mortars . . . will be brought before a court-martial.

He added that he had directed that an inquiry must be made into the responsibility of senior officers also. Certain disciplinary measures were eventually taken, the chief being that the commander of the 20th Battalion, who had not personally inspected his line as soon as the enemy's fire began to ease, was sent back to Australia.<sup>42</sup>

The result of their first engagement in France was indeed most mortifying to both Australian commanders and troops. The one reassuring feature, not fully appreciated in the general chagrin, was that the infantry and their company officers, who were in no way to blame for the breach of orders concerning the trench-mortars, had shown much staunchness under a far heavier bombardment than Anzac troops had ever previously experienced. The loss of the two Stokes guns rapidly became known through the army, and the sensitiveness of Australian soldiers to the resulting blame was increased by the fact that several British newspapers at

<sup>42</sup> But see pp. 213-14, 217-18. Had the Anzac staff possessed previous experience of such raids it is probable that a less serious view would have been taken of the enemy's irruption, but not of the loss of the mortars.



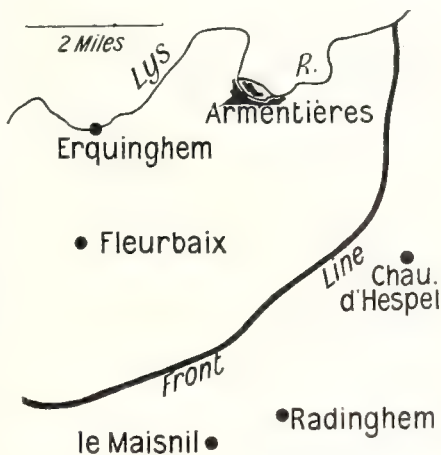
the time were publishing accounts, not from the responsible British war-correspondents, of mythical feats by "the Anzacs." On the Anzac Corps staff the enemy's success gave rise to the inference that the trenches in the area were not sufficiently defensible, and orders were issued that, "in view of the need for special exertion," resting battalions and reserve brigades should be put on to work at the expense of their training. Even greater insistence than before was laid upon the provision, for every part of the garrison, of a clear-cut defence scheme, and the general scheme was modified. The experience of May 5th had proved that during heavy bombardment the support line was no more tenable than the front; commanders were therefore informed that the garrison of both should be reduced to a minimum and, in the event of local bombardment, withdrawn temporarily to the flanks. The commanders on the immediate flanks of the bombardment would then make preparations to "counter-attack with fury" as soon as the barrage lifted and the enemy advanced. As the salients were the most likely objectives for minor enemy offensives, special provision was to be made for them in the local schemes; and General Birdwood pointed out that two localities which called for special attention were, first, the "Well Farm Salient," second, the salient in front of the Cordonnerie near the southern flank of the corps.

From the date of this raid, the Armentières sector became slightly "livelier," but chiefly in consequence of the raising on May 6th of the close restrictions on the use of artillery ammunition. The daily allowance to Australian field-gun and howitzer was more than trebled, so that during the next month each gun fired on an average ten rounds per day. The field artillery at this time, in order to deceive the enemy as to its battery-positions, was firing chiefly with "mobile" guns, taken out of their emplacements and shooting either in the open behind a hedge or trees or from some old emplacement. These guns could more easily bring unexpected bursts of fire to bear upon German working parties or other targets. In some brigades every eighteen-pounder battery had one of its guns thus removed, and there was clear evidence



that they puzzled the enemy.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless the artillery did not at first make full use of the increased supplies, and General White urged that it must undertake definite operations largely against those points in the enemy's back area where it was known or suspected that numbers of his troops could be caught and heavy casualties inflicted. The shelling was not to be a perfunctory routine, but carefully planned so as to cause loss and assist in wearing out the enemy.

A new condition at this time was that, when the enemy shelled, the British guns were at last able to retaliate freely. As the Germans, too, retaliated for any aggression on the part of the British artillery, the combat sometimes became lively. For example, on May 21st the Anzac heavy artillery bombarded and destroyed the spires of the village churches at Radinghem and Le Maisnil, as well as the Château d'Hespel, which, though known to be observing stations or headquarters of the German artillery, had hitherto been left alone. The enemy at once shelled Fleurbaix church and Erquinghem village.<sup>44</sup> In spite of the activity of the artillery the front lines remained generally quiet. Australian patrols had not yet succeeded in capturing a German, when, in the middle of May, the brigades were ordered to begin preparations for a series of raids upon the enemy opposing them. These enterprises, however, would not begin until June. The salients remained the



<sup>43</sup> The Germans, for their part, also practised successful ruses. For example, the 21st Bavarian R.I.R. (opposite Cordonnerie) used to light fires in unused houses and dig small shelters near unoccupied positions, with the result that these positions were sometimes heavily bombarded by the opposing artillery, which thus wasted part of its available shell supply. (*History of 21st Bav. R.I.R.*, p. 41.)

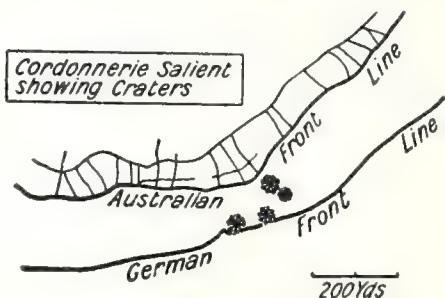
<sup>44</sup> During the bombardment of Erquinghem General Gellibrand (6th Brigade) was wounded.

most "touchy" points in the line,<sup>45</sup> and in that near Cordonnerie there occurred, for the first time for some months, active underground fighting. At this point each side had run forward galleries which had long since been in fairly close contact.

The British mine-shafts, eleven in number, were being worked by the 175th British Tunnelling Company, but this was being relieved by the 2nd Australian Company when the Germans on May 12th fired a mine about fifty yards from the Australian line.

It caused no damage to the British miners or to their workings. On May 22nd, as the German picks appeared to be only three feet away, the Australians blew two *camouflets*.<sup>46</sup> The duel was still in progress on May 30th,<sup>47</sup> when, the enemy being again close, the Australians fired another *camouflet*.

On that day the 11th Battalion (mainly Western Australian) of the 3rd Brigade was holding the Cordonnerie Salient, with the 9th (Queensland) on its right and the 5th (Victorian) of the 2nd Brigade on its left. The front was fairly sleepy, although German aeroplanes had flown persistently over the line. The evening was misty, but the enemy's trenches were still faintly visible, when, at

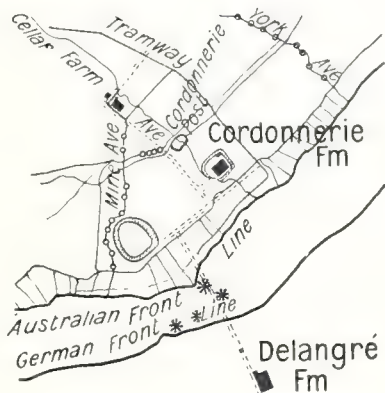


<sup>45</sup> For example, in the Bridoux Salient on June 14, the Australian bombers, in order to ascertain the position of the enemy's mine-throwers, fired shortly after midday 30 rifle-grenades. Three mine-throwers replied, firing twelve heavy bombs, which, however, did no damage. The position of all three weapons was thus discovered. Unfortunately, the enemy also retaliated by firing 20 high-explosive shells into the Bridoux salient and chord-line. One of these penetrated a dugout, killing Captain A. G. Ferguson—the gallant officer whose company had held the salient during the German raid—and Lieutenant A. E. Campling (of Kogarah, N.S.W.), and wounding Lieutenant H. B. D. Barlow (of Richmond, N.S.W.) and three others.

<sup>46</sup> Mines intended to destroy the enemy gallery, but not to break the surface.

<sup>47</sup> From German reports it has been ascertained that the two *camouflets* fired on May 22 merely crushed in a few frames in the German gallery. On May 23, the 5th (German) Mining Company fired a mine, causing a crater. It was the usual procedure on each side that if a mine was exploded and a crater formed, the neighbouring garrison must at once endeavour to occupy it. There were many craters at Cordonnerie; but, as most of them were small and No-Man's Land comparatively wide, any such attempt by either side would have been worse than useless. The 1st Division frequently reconnoitred the crater formed on May 23, but it was not permanently occupied.

8.15, a single German shrapnel- or smoke-shell burst high in the air over the post in the ruins of the Cordonnerie Farm, slightly over 100 yards in rear of the front line. A few seconds later the enemy's artillery crashed in like an orchestra over the left-hand corner of the salient, where it ended near a bunch of mine-craters south of the old roadway from the Cordonnerie in the British lines to Delangré Farm in the enemy's. Upon this apex the enemy poured 5.9-inch shell and heavy trench-mortar bombs, with dense shrapnel fire on either flank.<sup>48</sup> The great bombs dug



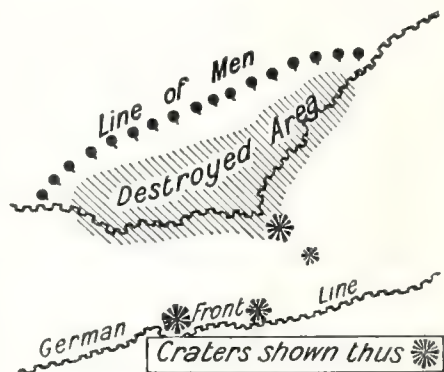
huge craters in the soft agricultural soil,<sup>49</sup> and the flimsy breastwork and shelters were flung into the air in shredded and splintered fragments. Under the local defence scheme, further elaborated since the raid on May 5th, the garrison, when so bombarded, was to be withdrawn to either flank, there to be prepared for an immediate counter-attack when the enemy lifted his barrage and advanced. As before, for those who were caught in this hurricane fire, practically no ordered action was possible. The bombardment extended well over Cordonnerie Post to about 400 yards in rear of the line, and in this area a great number were killed and wounded. But small parties gathered on the two edges of the bombardment under Captains Medcalf<sup>50</sup> and Macfarlane respectively. For an hour and twenty minutes this intense shell-fire descended continuously, the only recorded change in it being that, at "about half-time," it increased heavily upon Cordonnerie Post. Green rockets were at various times sent up by the enemy, apparently as a signal to his artillery to increase its range. At 9.30 a sudden development was observed.

<sup>48</sup> Some of the effects of this bombardment are shown in the upper air-photograph in *Chap. xiii* (plate 31).

<sup>49</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 186.

<sup>50</sup> Capt. F. G. Medcalf, D.S.O.; 11th Bn. Licensed surveyor; of Albany and Kondinin, W. Aust.; b. Sydney, N.S.W., 20 Sept., 1889.

The enemy's shells appeared to be thrown farther back, and his shrapnel was showered upon both flanks, as if to keep back a counter-attack. The mist was now driving up, wrack upon wrack, so thickly that many thought the enemy was throwing smoke-shells. Medcalfe at once began to get his men strung out across the open country in rear of the shattered trenches. A line was thus rapidly formed. A machine-gun was brought up near the right-hand edge of the gap in the breastwork and began to fire through it. Then, with the enemy's projectiles still flying overhead, the Australian troops advanced, directing their fire through the breach. To trace the precise



position of the front line was at the moment absolutely impossible. For sixty yards the defences were a tumbled rubbish-heap. No enemy was met—indeed the Germans also, on their side, had a machine-gun firing through the gap. The Australians were forced to keep very low as they approached the opening, but they succeeded in building up a breastwork before daylight.

The loss had again been heavy. In the 11th Battalion alone 110 had been killed or wounded, and six were unaccounted for;<sup>51</sup> but the action of men and officers, in the face of shattering bombardment, had been excellent. The battalion scouts, mostly old Gallipoli hands, had been given a general order that, if such bombardment came upon them, the moment it was lifted they were to report to battalion headquarters. Ten of them were in a dugout at Cordonnerie when a shell destroyed it, killing eight;<sup>52</sup> but the remaining two reported at headquarters the moment the bombardment eased. Moreover, although the direct telephone lines from

<sup>51</sup> The total loss was 131 (47 killed, 73 wounded, 11 missing).

<sup>52</sup> Pte. Cocking (*see p. 135*) was one of these.



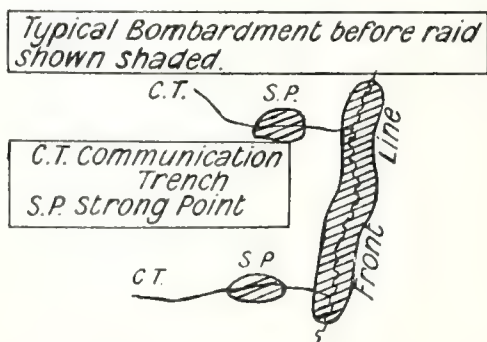
the 11th Battalion to the brigade were cut, a lateral line to the 9th Battalion remained, and through this Lieutenant-Colonel Roberts was able to keep the higher staffs well informed throughout. His report afterwards gave a clear account of what were then believed to be the salient features of the action, and pointed out that the plan of withdrawing to the flanks, and then rapidly counter-attacking as soon as the enemy's barrage lengthened, had been promptly and gallantly carried out. It was ascertained that the enemy had certainly entered the trench, and that one of his objects had been to destroy some of the mine-shafts, since two charges of explosive with fuses were found in the débris of the trenches, together with a number of hand-bombs. Five white tapes stretched across No-Man's Land showed clearly how his parties had been directed. At about 8.50 the company to the north of Medcalf's had seen Germans in No-Man's Land; and in the attacked sector one of the Lewis gunners, by name Plunkett,<sup>53</sup> though twice knocked down by a bomb, had mounted his gun on a traverse and fired at the enemy along their own guiding tapes. Several men who had been lying half-buried in débris spoke afterwards of seeing Germans on the parapet, but the scene was "a mass of smoke and fumes," and the accounts were vague. Inside one of the mine-shafts an Australian was lying apparently shot dead; part of a mine-gallery had been damaged by a heavy explosion above it. There were indications to support the notion that the enemy had fired one of his charges at this point. Colonel Roberts of the 11th, however, considered this unlikely; and the missing men, although no trace could be found of them, were believed to have been blown to pieces by the bombardment. A bloodstained bandage found in No-Man's Land appeared to afford evidence that some damage had been inflicted on the enemy.

The senior commanders and staff were entirely satisfied with the conduct of the defence in this sharp fight; indeed both General Birdwood and General Plumer recorded their

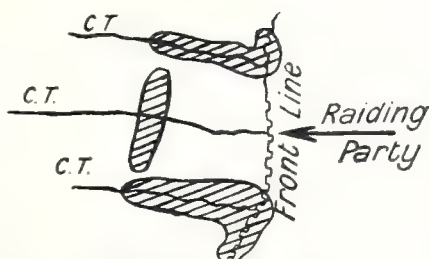
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<sup>53</sup> Sgt. W. Plunkett, D.C.M. (No. 586; 11th Bn.). Labourer; b. Liverpool, Eng., 1882. Killed in action, 16 April, 1917.

praise of it in messages to the higher staffs. Nevertheless it may be doubted whether, so far as concerned the action of the infantry, there was any important difference between this raid and the previous one, except in the manner in which they were afterwards reported. In both cases the crowded garrison of a front line had been caught in an annihilating bombardment, beneath which no concerted action was really possible. In each case a large proportion of the men had been overwhelmed and killed or wounded, while a certain number had made their way to the flanks and had there been collected by the company officers, who faced the situation with great coolness and courage. In each case, as soon as the enemy's fire began perceptibly to slacken, the men were led back to occupy the shattered line; but in neither case had the officers perceived the moment when the enemy "lengthened the range of his artillery in order to advance," simply because nowhere, except at the actual point of entry, did that process occur. In these and other raids the bombardment on the flanks (where the Australian parties were rightly waiting) was never lifted until the operation was over. At a certain stage the artillery firing on the central portion of the bombarded front lengthened range in order to make a cavity, as it were, into which the raiding party might enter, the shells then forming an indented curtain of fire—known as a "box"—on both flanks and in rear of the point to be raided. During this stage the bombardment on the flanks was, if anything, intensified, in order to protect the raiders against interruption. When the officer in charge of the raid signalled—possibly by firing a rocket—that his party had withdrawn, the guns which had been forming the "box" would shorten range on to the front line in order to prevent interference with



the party then retiring across No-Man's Land. This fire would be maintained for a few minutes until the raiders re-entered their own trenches, when it would quickly slacken and cease. There can be no question that this last phase was the



*Typical "Box" Barrage at moment of entry shown shaded  
C.T. Communication Trench.*

"change" observed by the company commanders on both May 5th and 30th; but by that time the enemy had already long since entered the trench, carried out his plan, and withdrawn. A study of the German reports shows that the true times of the several incidents were as follows:

	Bombardment started.		Box barrage formed for entry.		Enemy withdrew.		Bombardment ended.
May 5	.. 7.40	..	8.20	..	8.40	..	9.25
May 30	.. 8.15	..	9.5	..	9.20	..	9.40 <sup>54</sup>

It is now known that the object of this raid was to identify "beyond all doubt" the troops in front of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division, and incidentally "to blow up shafts and dugouts." On May 15 the divisional commander had ordered his regimental, artillery, pioneer, and trench-mortar commanders to submit to him within a week their completed plans for the enterprise which he outlined. Those of the regimental commander (Colonel von Braun, 21st Bav. R.I.R.) show that the raiding patrol (under Lieut. Brassler) was to comprise two parties of that regiment, each 39 strong, and a detachment of 4 miners, 8 pioneers, and 5 stretcher-bearers. Six and a half batteries of artillery, including two of heavy howitzers, would support the raid, and also nine light, six medium, and four heavy trench-mortars (including two *ladungswerfer*). In order that the suspicions of the British might be allayed by a cessation of all except usual bombardment on the 29th and 30th, the artillery preparation was to be finished by May 28. The trench-mortars were to register under cover of some artillery-fire on the morning of the 30th. The raiding party was by then to be in the sector, the men resting, but all the leaders reconnoitring by every possible means the Cordonnerie Salient. The time-table was: at 8.15 p.m., two of the heavy trench-mortars open

<sup>54</sup> With the added experience of later raids as a guide, it was possible to deduce these times, with almost complete accuracy, even before the German accounts were available. Thus, the moment of the German entry in the raid of May 30 was assumed to be "about half-time"—the stage at which it was observed that range had lengthened on to Cordonnerie Post. The times given in the history of the 21st Bav. R.I.R. are incorrect; the writer has evidently followed those laid down in the first order for the raid, which was, however, afterwards amended.



fire; at 8.25 the "torpedo-throwers" and medium trench-mortars, and at 8.30 all the remaining trench-mortars and artillery join in; at 9.5 bombardment lifts to form a "box," raiders advance, machine-guns open on suspected enemy machine-guns; 9.20—latest moment for commencement of the party's withdrawal. Elaborate precautions were to be taken to limit loss during the hours of disturbance by withdrawing most of the garrison and keeping the rest under cover. A model of the trenches to be attacked was made on the training ground of the 14th Bavarian R.I. Brigade.

After the raid Lieutenant Brassler reported that the fire of the Australian artillery in reply was light and fell on the support trenches or farther back. At 9.3 two pioneers from each party went out and opened lanes previously cut through their own wire, and at 9.5 the main parties went out. The shell-smoke lay so thickly that they could not see their objectives; but the distance was short, and the raiders reached the correct points without meeting fire of any kind. A minute later they had taken up their correct positions along the Australian trench, had established touch with one another throughout, and started on their work. But the group responsible for barricading the left proceeded only a dozen paces when it found the way blocked by six Australians, one of whom fired on it. An Australian machine-gun presently joined in, but was fired always too high. The group of Germans began bombing and Brassler sent to it four men of his reserve with sacks of grenades. He claims that this "checked the enemy" and that at 9.12 the machine-gun was silenced. Meanwhile a group whose business was to search the trenches on the left "fetched two of the enemy out of a recess; four more were brought out of a dugout, and five who resisted were cut down." The left "connecting party" lay, as ordered, on the parapet, and passed along orders.

Unfortunately for the Germans, at 9.12 someone shouted the word "Urlaub" ("furlough"), the signal to withdraw. "Through this stupidity," says Brassler, "the left group, which was just going forward to capture the machine-gun, was obliged to abandon it." But he managed to rally the right patrol, the barricade and connecting parties, and some others, and these resumed their work. The Germans were partly foiled in their purpose by the severity of their own bombardment, which had so levelled the trenches that it was impossible to ascertain whether they were drained or duckboarded, or to recognise the communication trenches. "The effect of the fire against the garrison must have been fearful. Bodies, buried and torn in shreds, were found in great number, and also very many dead, apparently unwounded, were seen in dugouts. . . . Shots came from one half-buried dugout, but a few grenades quickly settled the garrison."<sup>55</sup> A Lewis gun was unearthed, and on opening up a buried dugout the Germans found four men of the 11th Battalion who, not obeying an order to come out, were bombed, fired on, and eventually captured. Explosive charges were then laid in this dugout, and also in a trench bay, and in an old sloping gallery (actually a mine-shaft, though the raiders were uncertain whether it was this or

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted from the report of the regimental commander.



the entrance to a dugout).<sup>56</sup> The order to withdraw was given, fuses were lighted, and the raiders retired. One had been wounded in the trenches by the machine-gun previously mentioned; another was wounded re-crossing No-Man's Land; and one was killed and five wounded by the accidental explosion of a bomb after the party's return. The dugouts in their opponents' line were reported to be "extremely badly built"; and the reply of the Australian artillery is described as "late and without system; even its retaliatory fire was without effect."

The artillery was indeed aware that its fire on this occasion was too widely distributed, one reason being that the signal rockets used by the enemy again so closely resembled those of the Australians that they caused some of the batteries to open on other sectors than the one attacked. Whether the use of similar flares was an intentional ruse or an accidental coincidence, it is impossible to decide.<sup>57</sup> The same trick, if it was one, was played by the Anzac divisions when themselves raiding the Germans during the following month; but the enemy was by then found to have adopted rockets with elaborately changing colours or action.<sup>58</sup> They thus secured a trustworthy means of sending instantaneous signals to their artillery or other staffs, and it remained their chief method throughout the war. It was not until the latter half of 1917 that British troops were generally provided with a firework likely to defy imitation.

Even if the Anzac staff and commanders had realised that the Western Australian infantry on May 30th had in truth only repeated the admirable performance of the New South Welshmen on the 5th, there were reasons why they would have regarded the second raid much less seriously than the first. The truth is that, becoming more used to the conditions in France, they recognised that raids were incidents as inevitable as thunderstorms, and that, if the enemy decided to lay down a sufficiently powerful bombardment on and around the point to be entered, there was only

<sup>56</sup> Inside were several miners of the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Coy., and some of the 1st Pioneer Bn. The Germans had thrown down a few bombs, which did little damage. The men below determined to crawl out; but the first to emerge, a pioneer (Pte. W. E. Cox, of Parramatta, N.S.W.), was hit through the stomach by a revolver shot and fell back into the shaft dying, a second man being wounded by a bayonet. A German officer who could speak a little English ordered the others out, and five were thus made prisoners. The remainder of the ten or eleven prisoners taken in this raid belonged to the 11th Battalion; some were wounded.

<sup>57</sup> The Germans, especially during the subsequent fighting on the Somme, frequently stated that this trick was played upon them by the British. The use of similar signals was, however, almost always purely accidental.

<sup>58</sup> See note 12 of Chap. ix and note 34 of Chap. xi.

a slight chance of preventing his entry. On May 30th the enemy had prepared the way for his raiding party by a bombardment more powerful, if anything, than on the 5th; he had literally erased the defences before attempting to enter them. The only true cause for serious concern on the Anzac side was the heavy loss caused by the German bombardment falling upon a garrison crowded in defences practically none of which were shell-proof.

The Anzac Corps had thus experienced two German raids preceded by bombardments such as were regularly expected on the Western Front, but unknown in Gallipoli.<sup>59</sup> They affected only single units, and very small sectors, indeed mere points in the line; but they impressed upon the whole force the irresistible orderliness of the Germans, and the relentless thoroughness with which, having made up their mind, even upon a minor aim, they went about its attainment.

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<sup>59</sup> For the companies or platoons involved, these two bombardments (though comparatively short and concentrated) were probably the most intense to which those particular troops were subjected during the war. The bombardment of the 23rd and 24th Battalions in November, 1915, at Lone Pine had been the heaviest experienced in Gallipoli; but it had been rendered serious only by the fact that the position was a crowded rabbit-warren, containing many shallow underground trenches, in some of which men were buried by the explosion of Turkish shells, (See *Vol. II*, pp. 848-51.)

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PLANNING OF THE SOMME OFFENSIVE

Six days after the enemy raid upon the Cordonnerie Salient the Australians undertook their first similar enterprise on the Western Front. This minor action of the 2nd Division was quickly followed by a raid by each of the two other divisions, and then by a series which formed a subsidiary part of the general plan of the Allies. Accordingly, before describing these minor operations, it becomes necessary to explain what that plan was.

It has been stated<sup>1</sup> that Lord Kitchener in July, 1915, succeeded in swinging the French Government to his view that no further offensive should be undertaken until Great Britain was ready to come in with her full strength. This decision had been shortly afterwards reversed, largely through the efforts of the French Commander-in-Chief, who was confident that he and the British could break through the German front in the autumn. After the costly failure of the consequent attempt in the Battles of Loos and Champagne it was recognised, perhaps more keenly than before, that, whereas the Central Powers had acted unitedly, the offensives of the Allies lost much of their effect through being disunited.

If France, Britain, Russia, and Italy were to aim, not a series of unconnected blows, but one simultaneous stroke from all sides, and with their whole weight behind it, the pressure upon the enemy should be crushing. To effect this plan a "Council of the Allies" was formed, and at the first meeting of this



*Projected Offensives, 1916.*

council at Paris, on the 6th of December, 1915, it had been decided to undertake in the following year a simultaneous

<sup>1</sup> *Vol. II, p. 766.*

offensive on the French, Russian, and Italian fronts. As the army of Great Britain during that year would attain approximately the full strength intended by Lord Kitchener—70 divisions—and the munition factories should also be approaching their maximum output, the British Army would for the first time play a part equal, or almost equal, to that of the French. Of the combined offensives, the most important would probably be that on the Western Front. Its details were left for consultation between Joffre and Haig, who decided that their main blow should be struck by their combined armies at the point where the British line joined the French—that is to say, near the Somme River. Joffre, however, was strongly of opinion that several preliminary offensives should be launched in order to wear out the enemy. As the French were insistent that their army must play the leading part in any final decisive onslaught,<sup>2</sup> he asked that the British should undertake the preliminary offensives, leaving France to hold herself in reserve for the decisive blow. Haig inclined to the opinion that preliminary attacks—other than a series of trench-raids, which he had readily promised to undertake—were a waste of strength that could much more profitably be reserved for the main blow; but acting, as was his wont, with a single-minded view to the ultimate benefit of the Allies, he deliberately left it to Joffre to propound the strategy of the joint offensive. As a result of a series of conferences culminating in February, he agreed to his



<sup>2</sup> See *Sir Douglas Haig's Command, 1915-1918*, by Dewar and Boraston, Vol. I, pp. 70-1, 91-2. Mermeix says (*Le Commandement Unique*, p. 125) that at the conference of the Commanders-in-Chief at Chantilly on 8 December, 1915, it was foreshadowed that the French would throw 40 divisions into this offensive and the British 20. This fact would seem to justify the French in reserving for themselves the decisive rôle. As a matter of fact, the British Government, though authorizing Haig to "prepare" for the offensive, did not, until the end of March, 1916, give its final assent to the operation. (*Soldiers and Statesmen*, by Sir William Robertson, Vol. I, pp. 259-60.)



colleague's proposal that the British should undertake not only trench-raids, but one "wearing-out" attack in April and, if the main offensive were delayed, another in May; and he promised to enter the main Allied attack north and south of the Somme with twenty-five British divisions. He appears to have pointed out, however, that, if he were forced to use up his troops in preparatory attacks or in taking over more of the French line, he would have less striking power for the joint offensive.<sup>3</sup>

The main offensive was to be a truly tremendous one, with a front of forty-five miles, the British launching, possibly, 25 divisions on a front of 15 miles north of the river, while the French, with 39 divisions, attacked on a 30-mile front, mainly south of it.<sup>4</sup> Joffre expected that the Russians would not be ready until June. Accordingly, at a conference on February 14th, it was agreed that the Franco-British offensive on the Somme should open on July 1st. A few days before this decision was arrived at, Joffre had informed Haig that it seemed probable that the Germans were about to launch an offensive against the French at Verdun. This attack, occurring ten days later, had an immediate and decisive influence upon the Allied plans for the Somme battle.

The German General Staff, according to General von Falkenhayn, who was at that time its chief, had in 1915 been prevented by the "very moderate achievements" of the Austro-Hungarian Army from launching an important offensive in the West during that year.<sup>5</sup> He believed, however, that on the Russian front the full intention of the staff had been carried out by Hindenburg, who had so shaken the Russian armies that, though not totally destroyed, they could not again turn to the offensive. The coming storm of the Russian revolution could already be seen, "distant but clearly recognisable." So long as Russia was thus curbed and Austria strong, the entry of Roumania was not feared;

<sup>3</sup> *Sir Douglas Haig's Command, 1915-1918*, by Dewar and Boraston, Vol. I, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> The French right was to be on the River Oise.

<sup>5</sup> *General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, by General von Falkenhayn, p. 193. Falkenhayn states that the original intention had been to conduct operations in 1915 in such a way that the French and English would lose all hope of changing the situation in their favour before France bled to death.

indeed, although that country was at this time negotiating to sell her corn and fodder to the Allies, she made a similar agreement with the Central Powers, and thus helped to avert a famine in Germany and Turkey. It had been observed by the German leaders that the attitude of Roumania depended upon whether Russia or Austria was getting the upper hand: after the crushing defeats administered to Russia and Serbia, she appeared fairly friendly. To summarise:—"if the troops . . . of the Central Powers did their duty in the East, serious danger from that quarter was no longer to be apprehended."<sup>6</sup> Germany should therefore be able to turn without anxiety to the task of dealing with England and France in the West.

Whether, however, Austria would continue to "do her duty" in the East was not entirely certain. Austria's especial and private enemy, now that Serbia had been crushed, was Italy; and the Austrian leaders were greatly attracted by a plan of descending upon Italy from the Tyrol and cutting off her north-eastern corner, which they much coveted. Consequently, when Germany's Russian and Serbian offensives came to an end, the Austrian command asked that nine of the German divisions in the eastern theatre should be sent to Galicia in addition to the Germans already there, so that Austrian troops might be released for a projected advance into Italy. The Austrian staff promised that, having accomplished this advance, it would release 400,000 men for employment on the Western Front.

But the German staff did not trust the capacity of Austria to drive Italy out of the war by the proposed offensive; and short of that result, whatever the private gain to Austria, the undertaking could, in the opinion of the German staff, serve no sufficient purpose. From the point of view of the general conduct of the war, it mattered little whether the Italians held their present line or one farther back. Falkenhayn accordingly replied to this effect, and suggested that Austria should instead hand over to the German command all available troops. This caused Austria to drop for the

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<sup>6</sup> *General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, by Falkenhayn, p. 194.

time being all mention of her project of invading Italy, though she continued, against the advice of the German staff, to prosecute her campaign in Albania and Montenegro.

Subject to these anxieties, it appeared possible for Germany, at the beginning of 1916, to disregard the East and during the coming year turn her whole attention to the Western Front, where alone, according to the belief of the German staff, a decision in the war on land could be obtained. Accordingly at Christmas 1915 Falkenhayn drew up for the Kaiser a statement setting forth in a striking manner his considered opinion as to the action to be taken during the coming year in order to win the war. In this he first attacked the question whether victory was attainable, and then discussed the steps by which he hoped it might be reached. A great deal had been achieved: Russia was no longer able to attack; the Serbian Army had been destroyed; Italy was losing her "brigand's" hopes; and France had been militarily—and, by the "permanent" loss of coalfields, economically—weakened. From these achievements some conclusion should be obtainable,<sup>7</sup> were it not for certain circumstances of which the chief was "the enormous hold which England still has on her Allies." England, though, "severely shaken," was about to adopt conscription, and her history showed that

Germany can expect no mercy from this enemy so long as he still retains the slightest hope of achieving his object. . . . England, a country in which men are accustomed to weigh up the chances dispassionately . . . is obviously staking everything on a war of exhaustion. We have not been able to shatter her belief that it will bring Germany to her knees, and that belief gives the enemy the strength to fight on.

The object of the German command must therefore be (Falkenhayn argued) "to dispel that illusion"; that is—to force England to recognise that she could not win the war. This could not be done by remaining on the defensive, since Germany's allies could not hold out indefinitely, nor could she herself. The winter of 1916-1917—or, at latest, of 1917-1918—would bring to the Central Powers food crises "and the social and political crises that always follow." There was therefore no time to lose.

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<sup>7</sup> The words in the English edition of Falkenhayn's book (*p.* 210) are: "If no deductions can be drawn from these facts, the reasons are to be sought in many circumstances . . . chief among them . . . the enormous hold which England still has on her Allies."

But could any action on land bring about the defeat of England? "The island itself . . . cannot be reached by our troops. Of that the navy is profoundly convinced." A stroke at England's out-stations—Salonica, the Suez Canal, Mesopotamia—was advocated by some Germans, and might indeed shake the faith of Mohammedan and Near-Eastern peoples in the British strength; but England would survive such humiliations, as she had already done in the case of Gallipoli. On the other hand, the problem of defeating her on the Western Front was extraordinarily difficult. On its northern sector the only aim worth achieving was that of driving the French Army behind the Somme and the British completely off the continent. But even this was not likely to make England throw up the struggle, and the fighting, being against the British, would do comparatively little damage to the French Army. Moreover for this particular offensive, or for one on the neighbouring French front, the German commanders estimated that thirty divisions would be required. But even by thinning the German forces in the East to a dangerous extent, only twenty-five or twenty-six could be made available in France; and new divisions could not be formed in Germany on a large scale during that winter.

Falkenhayn therefore concluded that the only way decisively to attack Great Britain on land was to strike at her allies. "If we put these armies out of the war, England is left to face us alone. . . . It is true there would be no certainty that she would give up, but there is a strong probability. More than that can seldom be asked in war."

The question remained which of "England's tools on the continent"<sup>8</sup> should be chosen as the objective for this blow. The military achievements of Italy were, in Falkenhayn's opinion, so small that, even should she desert the Entente, "which is scarcely thinkable," it would "make no serious impression on England." As for Russia, her domestic difficulties were multiplying, and "even if we cannot, perhaps, expect a revolution in the grand style, we are entitled to believe that Russia's internal troubles will compel her to give

<sup>8</sup> England was, throughout the war, the most hated of Germany's opponents, and Falkenhayn's arguments, even in a military appreciation of this nature, are not unaffected by this feeling.



in within a relatively short period." Moreover a thrust at St. Petersburg or Moscow "takes us nowhere."<sup>9</sup> He concludes:

There remains only France. . . . The strain on France has almost reached the breaking-point—though it is certainly borne with the most remarkable devotion. If we succeeded in opening the eyes of her people to the fact that in a military sense they have nothing more to hope for, that breaking-point would be reached,<sup>10</sup> and England's best sword knocked out of her hand.

It remained to decide how France was to be struck. With Germany's now limited reserves, an attempt to break in mass through the French front was impossible; but it was also unnecessary, for—"within our reach behind the French sector . . . there are objectives for the retention of which the French General Staff would be compelled to throw in every man they have." Such an objective was the fortress of Belfort; another, that of Verdun. If the enemy could be forced into a desperate defence of one of these places, "the forces of France will bleed to death—as there can be no question of a voluntary withdrawal." This would happen even if the German offensive did not reach its objective. If, however, the objective was reached, the moral effect on France would be enormous. Moreover, this plan was practicable; Germany's comparatively small reserve would suffice for so limited an offensive.<sup>11</sup> Of the two objectives, Falkenhayn favoured Verdun, since its possession by the French was always a danger to the Germans, whose railway communications ran within twelve miles of the place.

The German plan of campaign for 1916 was accordingly to strike a blow as cheaply as possible at the fortress of Verdun, in order that France, bleeding to death, might be forced to seek peace and England thus induced to abandon the struggle. The projected land operations formed, it is true, only half, and perhaps the less important half, of the

<sup>9</sup> Falkenhayn adds that the only useful objective in Russia would be the rich territory of Ukraine, a thrust at which might involve the making of war upon Roumania also, which was at the moment "impracticable."

<sup>10</sup> That is, presumably, France would be driven to make peace.

<sup>11</sup> The German reserve in France was raised to 25 or 26 divisions. Of these nine must be retained in order to meet an Allied counter-offensive on some other part of the Western Front, which, experience showed, was certain. This left seventeen or eighteen divisions for use at Verdun. Only nine were actually required for the first attack, an equal number being held ready to extend the operation or to replace exhausted troops. See Falkenhayn's *General Headquarters, 1914-1916*, p. 228.

plan for striking at England. Germany also intended to aim a more direct blow upon the sea by means of an "unrestricted"<sup>12</sup> submarine campaign. But the torpedoing without notice of an unarmed cross-Channel passenger-boat, the *Sussex*, aroused a determined protest from the United States, which induced the German Government to abandon for the time being that intention. The attack on Verdun thus became the supreme German effort in 1916.

After at least eight preliminary feints elsewhere, intended to mislead both enemy and friends,<sup>13</sup> the bombardment of Verdun was commenced on February 21st. For the purpose of this battle—or at all events during its course—tactics were devised which powerfully influenced the methods of all armies in the course of the next two years. "A break-through operation on the familiar plan," says Falkenhayn, "we were particularly anxious to avoid . . . . Our object was to inflict on the enemy the utmost possible injury with the least possible expenditure of lives on our part." Although the intention not to break through was abandoned before the battle,<sup>14</sup> the tactics were adapted for attrition. Heavy artillery and ammunition in quantities far exceeding any former provision were brought up, and the preparatory bombardments were of a severity unknown in previous warfare, pounding trenches and earthworks into powder, so that, when the moment for the assault came and the guns lengthened range, a comparatively thin line of infantry could advance, practically unopposed, and occupy the shattered trench. The essential point of the new "limited" tactics, which were eventually perfected by the British in 1917, was that the infantry should not, as heretofore, attempt to penetrate to the

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<sup>12</sup> By "unrestricted" is meant that German submarines need no longer follow the practice, hitherto imposed upon them, of examining a merchant ship (to see if she carried neutral passengers or non-contraband cargo) before they sank her. By coming to the surface for this examination the submarines, of course, endangered themselves and gave an enemy merchant ship a far better chance of escape; by not doing so, on the other hand, they would in the long run inevitably sink a certain number of neutral ships and neutral citizens.

<sup>13</sup> *General Headquarters and Its Critical Decisions*, p. 223.

<sup>14</sup> Falkenhayn's orders of 27 January, 1916, were: "It is of vital importance that the attack is never permitted to come to a standstill, so that the French are given no opportunity to settle themselves again in rearward positions, and to organise resistance again after it has once been broken." (*Graf Schlieffen und der Welt Krieg*, Vol. III, by Lieut.-Colonel Wolfgang Foerster, quoted in *The Army Quarterly*, Vol. III, p. 146.)

utmost possible depth, a process which on the Western Front had always led to costly failure; on the contrary, the attacking line was not on any account to advance beyond the range of its protecting artillery. When it reached that set limit it must wait for the heavy artillery to advance to new positions, when a new bombardment would be laid down and a further advance made, always under complete cover of the guns.

Using these methods, and at first attacking only east of the Meuse, the Germans immediately overran the forward French lines, and within five days had reached and stormed the supposedly impregnable armoured fort of Douaumont. A week later the offensive was taken up west of the river, and continued practically without cessation for two months. As had been expected, the French were forced to throw in their reserves in desperate counter-attacks. In meeting these the usual policy of the Germans was simply to hold their ground and inflict loss; and, according to the calculations of the German staff, the French casualties at Verdun were at the rate of two and a half to every one on the German side. This calculation was wrong—the rate of loss was less than two Frenchmen to every German. As happened elsewhere, however, when the success of the offensive was at a later stage questioned, this argument induced the German staff to continue it.

The Battle of Verdun gradually absorbed the greater part of the troops whom the French had intended to reserve for the offensive on the Somme. General Pétain, the gallant defender of Verdun, to avoid wearing out the French counter-attacking divisions, gave each one to understand that when its task was achieved it would be immediately relieved. He thus succeeded in keeping up the spirits of the troops, but the process entailed a continuous flow of fresh divisions. By April 26th the number available for the French offensive on the Somme had fallen to 30; by May 22nd it had sunk to about 25; a month later it was 16, all used—but not used up—by Pétain in the defence of Verdun. The British also, who had at once assisted by taking over the line of the Tenth French Army in front of Arras,<sup>15</sup> had to draw upon forces which it had been intended to employ in the projected thrust.

<sup>15</sup> Haig offered to send British troops to Verdun, but Joffre preferred the other method.



It is true that during the height of the struggle at Verdun Joffre and Haig continued calmly to elaborate their joint plan for the Somme offensive; Colonel Renouard, the chief of the operations' department of Joffre's staff, stubbornly persisted in elaborating the French part of the plan, resisting much pressure from French officers and also from the public, who urged that England was allowing France to be strangled, and that the relieving offensive on the Somme should be forthwith undertaken, if not by the British, then by the French without them.<sup>16</sup> But it gradually became evident to Haig that, although the French were loyally determined to take part, the task would fall mainly on the British. This caused him gradually to abandon the plan of undertaking preliminary offensives,<sup>17</sup> and to concentrate his whole available reserve for the main stroke. Moreover, as the chief part in the battle was now to be played by the British, he urged that its opening date should be postponed until August, in order not only to enable the accumulation of more troops and guns, but to give longer time for bringing the new divisions up to the necessary standard of training. As, however, the strain upon the French at Verdun was too great to continue so long unrelieved, Joffre was unable to agree to any date beyond the end of June or beginning of July. Haig was informed that if the offensive was longer delayed, Verdun would undoubtedly fall.

While these conferences were proceeding, the Germans, who from the first had expected a counter-stroke in answer to their offensive at Verdun, observed on the Somme certain preparations for what they judged to be an impending attack.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *French Headquarters*, by Jean de Pierrefeu, pp. 74-5. The constant demand for fresh divisions caused much tension between this staff, intent on the coming operation on the Somme, and Pétain. This daily recurring friction was eventually avoided by the assignment to Pétain of fifty-three divisions, with absolute freedom to dispose of them.

<sup>17</sup> Two plans for such preliminary actions had been investigated: one for an attack north of the Somme to capture the first line of German defences on the front (or part of it) of the subsequent main attack; the other for an offensive in Flanders (see p. 323).

<sup>18</sup> The steps by which this knowledge was gained are interesting. As early as February, German airmen had reported the construction of new huts for British troops on both sides of the Ancre River (a few miles north of the Somme). By raiding the British trenches the Germans then found that the number of divisions had been increased: by the end of April the four German divisions north of the Somme were thus found to be confronted by twelve British. This being a clear indication of the British intention, the Germans considered the possibility of dislocating the British offensive by themselves forthwith attacking. The force locally available, however, was too small, the divisions each holding fronts of from 6,000 to 9,000 metres, and some of the artillery having to be sent to Verdun and replaced by captured foreign guns.



They recognised that the French, though greatly strained, might still possess sufficient man-power—especially with their reserves of black troops—to take some part. In order to prevent their doing so, Falkenhayn decided to continue the attack at Verdun. Accordingly at the beginning of June the armoured fort of Vaux was attacked and, after terrible fighting, captured. The thrust was continued against Fleury and Thiaumont, both of which fell about three weeks later.

This new flaring up of the battle placed a dangerous strain on the French, and Joffre was forced to the conclusion that the Somme offensive must be launched as soon as possible in order to relieve the pressure. He had promised to give Haig a fortnight's notice, and consequently on June 11th he sent an urgent request that the attack should be made on June 25th. The number of divisions which could be spared by the French was rapidly diminishing, and it is now known that the intention of Falkenhayn was to continue his thrust a stage further, the next objective being certain defences of the inner line, "the possession of which would make the citadel (of Verdun) and its neighbourhood a hell for the French."<sup>19</sup>

At this stage, however, Falkenhayn's plan was suddenly arrested by a most serious miscarriage of his previous calculations. His plans for 1916 had been based on the suppositions that Russia had been too soundly beaten to return to the offensive; that the troops of the Central Powers on the Russian front could easily hold their own; and that Austria had abandoned her intention of making a "private attack" upon Italy. It was therefore a shock to his expectations when, on March 18th and subsequent days, the Russians attacked on a broad front the northern sector of the German line in the East. This offensive—which, in spite of the admitted bravery of the troops, is described by Falkenhayn as "bloody sacrifices rather than attacks . . . badly trained men led by officers as bad"—was defeated by the Germans without difficulty and with very heavy loss to the Russians. It was rightly judged by the German staff to have been part of a plan concerted with the Western Allies, and its result served to confirm the opinion of the German staff—that the Russian Army was now incapable of serious attack.

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<sup>19</sup> *General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, p. 239.

A more unwelcome shock came from Austria. Rumours reached German headquarters that the Austrian staff, without informing its ally, was proceeding with the preparation of its "private" offensive against Italy. In vain, states Falkenhayn,<sup>20</sup> the German staff warned their Austrian colleagues "often and emphatically" that the security of the Eastern front must not be allowed to suffer. He might have attempted to take further precautions, but he trusted that, through the German *liaison*-officers in Austria, he would be able to perceive and prevent in good time any dangerous withdrawal of Austrian troops from the East for an Italian offensive. On May 14th, however, the Austrian General Staff informed the German that it proposed to launch an attack upon Italy from the Tyrol, and the offensive began that day. It proceeded quickly at first in the centre, but was held up on the flanks, and, early in June, was completely checked by heavy Italian counter-attacks.

On June 5th came news of a greater calamity. German headquarters suddenly received from Austria "a most urgent call for assistance." It was then learnt that on the previous day the Russians, under General Brusiloff, had attacked practically the whole of the Austrian front opposed to them, and, though only slightly superior in numbers and assisted by only a comparatively light bombardment, had broken through both flanks of the Austro-Hungarian line in the East. This was indeed the promised Russian offensive, news of which was eagerly expected by the French and British commanders.<sup>21</sup> The German high command, recognising that the advance, if allowed to proceed, might result in the military and political breakdown of Austria, which "meant in any circumstances the loss of the war,"<sup>22</sup> was forced to come to Austria's help with five divisions, three of them from the Western Front. This help, however, was only given on definite terms. Germany contended that Austria, for the sake of her Italian "excursion," had robbed the Eastern Front of men and artillery, and had endeavoured to hold it with her least

<sup>20</sup> *General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, p. 242.

<sup>21</sup> The attack was three weeks later than the date on which it was expected by the Allies, but was nevertheless most timely.

<sup>22</sup> *General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, p. 249.

reliable troops. To guard against the recurrence of such an event, the Austrian command was forced to promise that no important operations should in future be undertaken without first coming to an agreement with the German high command.<sup>23</sup>

The plans both of Germany and of her opponents, though much modified, were at this stage leading to some of the results which each side had expected. France was being dangerously bled by the German home-thrust at Verdun. Yet the difficulties now towering around Germany were enormous. She had found herself plunged into a desperate struggle on the Eastern frontier, where the inferior Austro-Hungarian troops had to be strengthened by an infusion of Germans. Moreover, now that Austria was being beaten, the Roumanian Government and people were in a better position to follow their inclination to support the Allies. The German staff, plainly seeing that Roumania's entry was impending, was forced to begin preparations for a counter-thrust. On top of this, an enemy offensive was expected in the West. In Germany's favour were the incidental facts that Russia, in spite of Brusiloff's success, was rapidly using up her last reserve of effort, and that the expedition to Salonica, which the French Government, in spite of Great Britain's protests, insisted upon prosecuting, was uselessly locking up a large force of Allied troops which might otherwise have been employed on the Western Front.<sup>24</sup> In the "Middle East" the Russian incursions into Armenia and Persia seemed to have reached their limits; and Germany's allies, the Turks, had gained a striking success by the capture of General Townshend's Anglo-Indian force at Kut el Amara. The Turkish force in Mesopotamia, however, was too weak to follow up this advantage. The intended advance by the Turks against the Suez Canal had not taken place.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Germany also endeavoured to force Austria to place the Austrian sector of the Eastern Front under the command of the German Field-Marshal von Mackensen. This demand Austria flatly refused.

<sup>24</sup> In sharp contrast to the influence of the Gallipoli campaign, the Salonica expedition appears to have caused the German staff no anxiety. Falkenhayn actually states that it was "more advantageous (to Germany) to know that between two and three hundred thousand men were being chained to that distant region than to drive them from the Balkan Peninsula, and thence to the French theatre of war."

<sup>25</sup> Apparently the reason was that "it had not been possible during the cool season of 1915-1916 to bring up the necessary material with sufficient promptitude." (*General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, p. 260.)



In these difficult circumstances Falkenhayn still persisted with the German offensive at Verdun. By this time he knew that the French, in spite of their losses, intended to take part in the Somme offensive, the "specially good XX French Corps, known as a 'Gladiator Corps,' having been identified by raids north of the Somme," but even at that late hour he believed that France could, by additional pressure at Verdun, be prevented from carrying out that intention. Arrangements for the assault on the inner works were in progress when, on June 24th, the British and French opened the bombardment preceding their offensive on the Somme.

The plan of this offensive, immense though the operation still was, had at a late stage<sup>26</sup> been greatly changed from that which was originally intended. The number of French divisions available had now sunk to 16. Only 5 would take part in the first attack, which, instead of assaulting on a 30-mile front as originally intended, would attack on an offensive front of 6 miles,<sup>27</sup> mainly south of the Somme. The British were to launch 13 divisions on a front of 15½ miles north of the river.<sup>28</sup> Behind the divisions destined for the first attack the British had another 6, and the French rather more. Thus the assault originally planned, with some 60 divisions on a front of 45 miles, had shrunk to one with about

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<sup>26</sup> Until a late stage the German staff still refused to believe that the French intended to participate in the Somme offensive. The discovery, early in June, that French troops had taken over from the British part of the line north of the Somme was attributed to a desire to narrow—and thus to strengthen—the British front of attack. It was shortly after this that the discovery of the famous XX Corps rendered it almost certain that the French would take part. Other preparations were observed south of the Somme as far as the Roman road leading from Amiens to Péronne, and thus "the supposed frontage of the enemy's offensive was fairly clearly established." (*Experience of the German First Army in the Somme Battle*, by General von Below.)

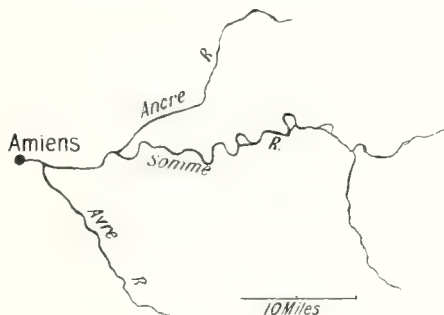
<sup>27</sup> The French front was actually eight miles, but it included about two miles of river.

<sup>28</sup> Until the opening of the German offensive at Verdun, the main British offensive on the Somme was to have extended to Gommecourt. As the Third Army then held the whole front of the intended attack, the operation was to be under Allenby, and the tactical plans were first drafted by him. It was, however, considered that 25 divisions were too many for the control of one army-commander, and Rawlinson was therefore appointed on February 5 to command, under Allenby, a new army—the Fourth—which would undertake the southern half of the British attack. But on February 27, when Haig agreed to take over immediately the front of the Tenth French Army at Arras, the Fourth Army was made an independent command, and the task of planning—subject to Haig—the British part in the offensive was transferred from Allenby to Rawlinson. The latter did not wish to extend the front of his own attack as far north as Gommecourt, but it was arranged that the Third Army should assist by undertaking an attack in that sector.



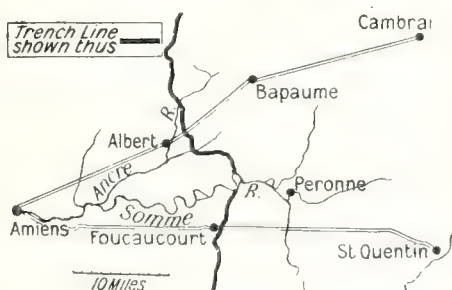
half that force on a 23-mile frontage, of which two-thirds would be occupied by the British. Nevertheless the blow would still carry tremendous weight.

The sector where the French and British lines joined, and where the joint offensive was to be launched, was about twenty miles east of the cathedral city of Amiens,<sup>29</sup> a town dating from pre-Roman times, and formerly the capital of the old French province of Picardy. The city lies on the small triangle of marsh and lowland where the River Somme, emerging from the low chalk hills to the east, is joined by the smaller River Avre flowing from the south-east. Eight miles east of Amiens the Ancre, another small stream, similarly



flows into the Somme from the north-east; and across the fairly high tongue of land between these streams the French and German lines had faced each other since September, 1914, when they had crystallised there during the race of each army to outflank the other. Of the Roman roads which

radiate from Amiens, running, according to the Roman fashion, straight across country like the spokes of a wheel, one ran north-east to the town of Albert,<sup>30</sup> eighteen miles distant on the Ancre, and another due east. The Albert road, after



traversing that town, crossed the trench-line in the undulating country two miles east, and passed on to Bapaume (8 miles beyond the British line) and Cambrai (28). The eastern road, after climbing on to the plateau south of the Somme, ran

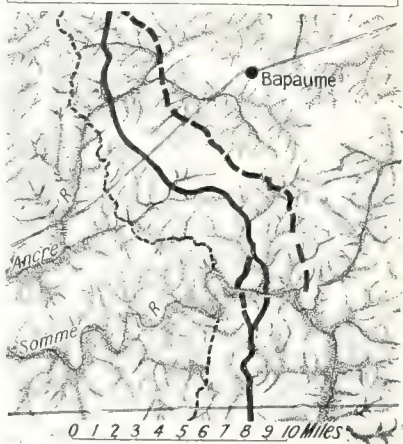
<sup>29</sup> See Vol. XII, plates 460, 470, 499. Amiens had 90,000 inhabitants.

<sup>30</sup> Albert had before the war 7,000 inhabitants; Bapaume, about 3,000; Péronne, 4,500; Cambrai, 28,000; St. Quentin, 53,000.

through the line near the village of Foucaucourt and thence towards the old cities of Péronne (6 miles beyond the French line) and St. Quentin (24). At this time, both north and south of the Somme, the Germans had constructed two complete systems of trenches, each of several lines, the second system lying in most parts some two miles in rear of the first. In

the area north of the Somme and south of the Ancre, through which region the main British effort would be directed, the troops would mainly be attacking up spurs leading down to the Ancre and a small tributary. Their advance would be towards a ridge one to three miles distant, and they would have before them three lines: the front line lay chiefly round the lower parts of the folds; the second line generally

*German Lines are shown thus:  
First-----Second-----Third-----*



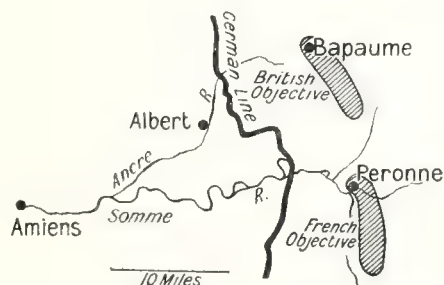
followed the crest; and a third line had been constructed, two or three miles beyond the second, partly on the slope of the valley behind the ridge. On the far side of the valley was the swelling ground on which lay Bapaume. The third line was still incomplete, but by incessant labour the first and second systems had been rendered extremely formidable. In this undulating country, where most of the subsoil was chalk, tunnelling was dry and safe, and both sides had taken advantage of this, not only to attack the other by mining, but to provide deep tunnelled dugouts for their troops. The German dugouts were by far the more extensive and elaborate.<sup>31</sup>

In the original plan of the Somme offensive the intention had been that, on the north, the Third British Army—with the Fourth Army forming its right<sup>32</sup>—and, on the south, several French armies, should strike eastwards until the enemy's line was pierced. Unlike the German attempt at Verdun, this thrust was from the first intended to lead to a

<sup>31</sup> See Vol. XII, plates 200, 201.

<sup>32</sup> See note 28 on p. 232.

"break through" into the unfortified—and, it was hoped, temporarily undefended—country beyond the German trench-lines. The Allied commanders were not, like Falkenhayn, inclined to think that "questions of command and supply in these attacks were (almost) insoluble."<sup>33</sup> Nor did their higher staffs share the pessimism of the troops in this respect,<sup>34</sup> it being anticipated that, however strong and numerous the trench-lines, there would sooner or later come a time—either at some crisis in the swiftly proceeding offensive or at the end of a long "wearing out" struggle—when the enemy would lack either the men or the morale adequately to defend them. If the plan of a simultaneous offensive by all the Allies were vigorously carried out, there seemed to the Allied staffs a good prospect of breaking through on the Somme by one or other of these processes. At the best it was hoped that the opportunity would occur in the first few days of the battle. According to the original plan, the main strength of the blow was to be directed immediately north of the Somme, a very strong French force being concentrated there with the object of thrusting to Mont St. Quentin, above Péronne, and thereby assisting the French armies farther south to cross the river, which at Péronne changes its course and ran directly across the French front.<sup>35</sup> If the French thus reached the high land about Péronne,

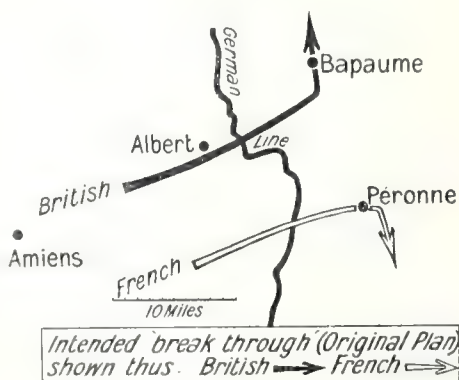


<sup>33</sup> Writing to the Third German Army early in 1916, Falkenhayn said: "We must not overlook the fact that previous experience of mass attacks in this war offers little inducement to imitate them. It would almost seem as if the questions of command and supply in these attacks were insoluble." (*General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, p. 33.)

<sup>34</sup> See p. 109.

<sup>35</sup> Joffre asked that a short section of line (one and three quarter miles) north of the Somme should be transferred to the French, it being, in his opinion, essential that, when the advance reached Péronne, the operations against that town and against Mont St. Quentin, which dominated it, should be in the same hands. Mont St. Quentin could be conveniently approached only from the north side of the river. The same tactics were adopted by Sir John Monash in 1918.

they would turn south-east and "roll up" the German line to the south. The advance of the French armies between the Somme and the Oise, where the country was comparatively easy, would force the enemy at least to abandon his immensely strong position along the wooded heights of the Aisne, thus clearing him from the neighbourhood of Paris, if not from France. At the same time the British, after piercing to the high ground about Bapaume, would strike north-east, and "roll up" the German line to the north. The cavalry would cover the eastern flanks of both armies; and, in order to prevent the enemy from closing the gap by rushing up his reserves from other parts of the front, subsidiary attacks were then to be delivered in Flanders or elsewhere, which would pin down the German forces to their existing positions, and so increase the Allied captures. If the enemy had already thinned his line, the subsidiary attacks might themselves pierce the enemy's front.



The chief aim, however, even in the original plan, was not so much to reach any locality as to capture or destroy the enemy's forces; and, when in June it finally became clear that, through the consuming of the French reserves at Verdun, the French part on the Somme must be a minor one,<sup>36</sup> it was decided that the British should adhere to their intention of breaking through, and then turning north-eastward, while the French would confine themselves to protecting the British Army's southern flank. The British attack would now be made by the Fourth Army under General

<sup>36</sup> It was not until June that the French command gave up hope of taking a much larger part.



Rawlinson, with two divisions of the Third Army assisting its left, and would be directed towards Bapaume rather than Péronne. It was still hoped that a breach in the German line could be effected within a few days, but the Allied leaders recognised that it might prove impossible. The first object of the offensive was now to relieve the pressure on Verdun;<sup>37</sup> and if this could not be done by piercing and rolling up the German line, the thrust would still be proceeded with, but with a different object—that of wearing down the German Army. Joffre, who still propounded the strategy, wrote to Haig that there was reason to expect a battle “of prolonged duration.” Haig, however, though studiously agreeing wherever possible, foreshadowed to his army commanders another possibility—namely, that if the thrust on the Somme were held up, it might prove more profitable “to transfer our main efforts rapidly to another portion of the British front.”

It remains to explain the precise steps by which General Rawlinson proposed to carry out the British part in the offensive. He personally was not at the first optimistic as to the practicability of breaking through. “Our object,” he wrote on April 3rd, “rather seems to be to kill as many Germans as possible with the least loss to ourselves.” In Rawlinson’s opinion, the German second line opposite the southern portion of his front was too distant to be adequately bombarded before the first attack, and was therefore unlikely to be pierced in a single advance. He throughout preferred an advance in comparatively short limited stages. But Haig, though keeping in view the possibility of failure, insisted that the plans must so be drawn that, if the German front crumbled after the first bombardment, the attacking troops might take the fullest advantage of the opportunity. After consultation with Joffre, he also directed that the main thrust must be towards the right of his front, in order to give the fullest assistance to the

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<sup>37</sup> In a letter to his army commanders on June 16, Haig said that the offensive would be undertaken “with the object of relieving the pressure on the French at Verdun, and inflicting loss on the enemy.” An additional object was to prevent the Germans from sending reinforcements to the Russian front.

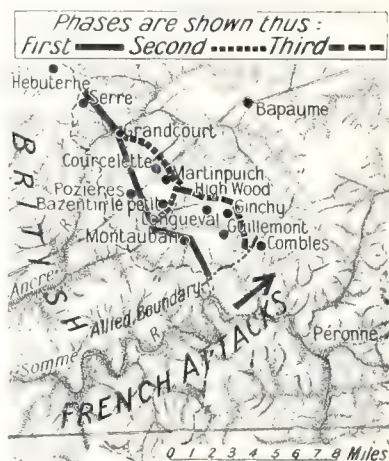
French.<sup>38</sup> It was therefore decided that the following objectives should be aimed at in the first assault:

*north of the Ancre*, a sector to cover the left of the advance farther south;

*south of the Ancre*, the ridge along which lay the second line, as far south of Pozières on the Albert-Bapaume road;

*south of the Bapaume road*, a series of positions from Contalmaison to Montauban, short of the second line but forming a good starting position for a second phase of the offensive.

This line to be reached in the first phase was designated the "green line." Upon its attainment—possibly within three hours, possibly not till the afternoon, or later—preparations would immediately begin for the second phase. The heavy artillery would maintain a certain amount of fire beyond the green line, allowing, however, the infantry to patrol forward. Meanwhile the field artillery would be brought up, together with new divisions which would, in the second phase, carry the centre of the British line from Pozières down the far slope of the ridge to Courcelelette and



<sup>38</sup> Haig specifically directed on May 16 that the high ground about Montauban (i.e., near the junction with the French) must be included in the objectives to be seized in the first attack. Rawlinson had wished to make this a second operation. Haig's intentions are illuminated by the following passages from his instructions to Rawlinson. He desired him to push straight on to "the furthest objectives of tactical value which we can reasonably hope . . . to retain after capturing." He also wished "full advantage to be taken of the period of panic and cessation of intense fire which usually exists for several hours after the assault." These instructions were given before the French share in the offensive had been whittled down, but Haig held to them throughout, though his hopes of success had, of course, diminished. On May 30, in conference at St. Pol, he is reported as having explained that it would not be sound to base the plans "on the expectation of completely destroying the enemy's power in one campaign before the winter." The British must therefore wear out the enemy as much as possible, and, by a resolute attack, support the French, who were losing severely at Verdun. They must also aim at putting themselves "in favourable positions for commencing a spring campaign in 1917, so as to make certain of success next year."

Martinpuich, and extend the capture of the second line as far south as Bazentin-le-Petit. The pause between the first and second phases would be "at least an hour," and the objectives to be gained in the second phase were known as the "brown line." Their capture would be followed as soon as possible—either on the second or third day, if all went well—by the third phase, in which (if not before) it was hoped to break through the German front. In this phase the lines north of the Ancre, and on what may be called the "Second-Line" Ridge immediately south of it, would stand fast, forming a defensive flank; and a powerful blow would be struck by the British right and the French left towards Longueval, Ginchy, Guillemont, and Combles. The objectives to be attained at this stage were referred to as the "purple line."

It was hoped that in one of these three phases—possibly in the first, if panic set in among the Germans, but more probably in the second—a breach would be opened in the enemy line. This would be the moment for the decisive employment of cavalry, which had never yet been possible on the Western Front, but in which Haig, himself a cavalry officer, maintained firm confidence. Three cavalry divisions held in reserve under a distinguished cavalry commander, Lieutenant-General Sir Hubert Gough,<sup>39</sup> were then to advance with the object of guarding the left of the infantry in the third phase and of pushing to the Bapaume heights. They would there be supported by two divisions of infantry, also under Gough, one of which would take over and hold Bapaume, and establish a strong defensive line thence southwards to the French flank.<sup>40</sup> The French would seize the same line of heights more to the south.<sup>41</sup> The direction of the offensive would then be changed northwards with the intention of "rolling up" the German line as far as Arras, while the Third Army attacked it from the front. For the

<sup>39</sup> Gen. Sir Hubert Gough, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., K.C.V.O., p.s.c. Commanded Fifth Army, 1916/18. Officer of British Regular Army; of Burrows Lea, Gomshall, Surrey, Eng.; b. 12 Aug., 1870.

<sup>40</sup> A line from Ginchy to Bapaume was first to be attained. From this the British, with the French on their right, would advance to the Bapaume-Péronne road. The two infantry divisions supporting Gough's cavalry would be provided—one each—by the III and X Corps (*i.e.*, by the corps operating on or near the Albert-Bapaume road).

<sup>41</sup> About Sailly-Saillisel. (The French reached it in September.)



northward advance Gough would possibly be given command of Rawlinson's three northernmost corps, the VIII, X, and III, a detachment on his right flank meanwhile holding off any attempted German counter-offensive.<sup>42</sup> Gough's force was known as the "Reserve Army," and he himself became an army commander, but he would act under the control of Rawlinson, who would determine the moment at which Gough should be "ordered through."<sup>43</sup>

The French force allotted for the attack consisted of a group of three armies, the Third, Sixth, and Tenth, under General Foch, of which, however, at present only the Sixth (General Fayolle) took any part.<sup>44</sup> Its famous XX Corps, crowded into a narrow salient north of the Somme together with the right of the Fourth British Army, suffered much inconvenience—as did the British—from the extreme congestion of the available roads, but the routes were fairly partitioned between them, and the relations between the moustached, and often bearded, blue-coated *poilus* and the usually clean-shaven and somewhat slighter "Tommies" were markedly loyal and cordial.

Such were the plans for the battle in which the new British army was for the first time to play the leading part. The conditions were not all entirely favourable. Haig was not, eventually, required to attack before July 1st, the date originally arranged; but he had not been given the full time which he thought desirable either for training the divisions

<sup>42</sup> It was foreshadowed that the break-through by Gough to Bapaume might occur twenty-four hours after the first launching of the offensive, or as much as a week or more later. It would then take two days to bring up the divisions for the northward drive.

<sup>43</sup> Gough's prospective command underwent several changes. It was at one time decided to place him at the beginning of the battle—subject to Rawlinson—in control of the XIII and XV Corps of Rawlinson's army which would attack the "purple line." The reason for abandoning this intention was that it might be necessary, if the first attack partly failed, to employ Gough's force at another part of the front. Gough intended to place his headquarters at first in Albert, and afterwards, if possible, at Pozières.

<sup>44</sup> The Third (General Humbert) was to afford a reserve to replace divisions worn out in the battle. At the end of June, however, Foch placed it in the line south of the Tenth (General Micheler), allowing the latter to move northwards up to the Roman (Amiens-St. Quentin) road, south of which it eventually attacked in September. The Sixth Army (General Fayolle), next the British, would attack astride of the Somme. Its left, north of the Somme, comprised the XX Corps (General Balfourier) of four divisions, two of which would attack. South of the Somme was another famous corps, the I Colonial (General Berdoulat), of four divisions, of which two and part of a third would attack. South of this, forming the right flank of the attack (on the St. Quentin road), would be the XXXV Corps (General Jacquot) of three divisions, of which one would take part. The five other divisions to be allotted to the Sixth Army (making sixteen in all) "would arrive progressively." (Gabriel Hanotaux, *Histoire Illustrée de la Guerre de 1914*, Vol. 14, p. 196.)



or for accumulating guns and ammunition. It is true that the British divisions on the Somme were to be supported by an artillery far heavier than had ever before been possible, but this provision did not yet nearly equal that of the French. General Foch had 900 heavy guns for his six miles of effective front, whereas the whole of the British heavy artillery then in France comprised only 730 pieces,<sup>45</sup> of which about 400 were on the Somme. Moreover, although the shell-supply appeared, by contrast with that of the previous years, to be almost unlimited, it did not approach the provision of later years. The weight of artillery ammunition used on the first day was 12,776 tons, as compared with 24,706 used nine months later on the opening day of the Battle of Arras, and with 20,638 on a much smaller front at Messines.<sup>46</sup> The British staff had expected, and planned for, a practically unlimited supply of shells, but immediately before the battle the resources were diminished, with the result that the command was constantly hampered by keen anxiety lest the expenditure of ammunition should exceed the supply, and some economy was still necessarily enforced. In the air the British were, for the first time, definitely superior to the Germans, whose air force was largely concentrated at Verdun. The attack was to be made on a front so wide that the enemy would be unable to crush it by a concentration of artillery-fire from the flanks, and there was less danger than formerly of the advance being narrowed down in its early stages to a dangerous salient. Intelligence reports showed that the Fourth British Army,

<sup>45</sup> *Sir Douglas Haig's Command, 1915-1918, Vol. I, p. 106; and Comment Finit la Guerre*, by Mangin, p. 77. The total number of heavy guns (including 85 of 4.7-inch) was 813. Of these, 425 were with the Fourth Army. The plans of the offensive had been based on the assumption that the Fourth Army would have about 200 howitzers of 6-inch calibre and over. Actually it had 245. At Loos, with rather less than half the front of attack, the troops had been supported by 100. But the ammunition-supply was now enormously increased.

<sup>46</sup> *The Army Quarterly, Vol. III, p. 309.*—"The Administrative Services of the B.E.F. during the Great War." The average daily expenditure of ammunition per gun during the first nine days of the Somme bombardment and attack was (in the Fourth Army):

- 18-pounder (720 guns)—184 rounds.
- 4.5-in. howitzer (180 guns)—156 rounds.
- 60-pounder (128 guns)—126 rounds.
- 6-in. howitzer (104 guns)—127 rounds.
- 8-in. howitzer (64 guns)—90 rounds.
- 12-in. howitzer (11 guns)—49 rounds.
- 15-in. howitzer (6 guns)—20 rounds.

The long-range 6-in. guns (20 in number) fired 70 rounds daily, and the 4.7-in. (numbering 32) 95.

on its main front, was faced by only 32 German battalions, and that, within six days, the enemy could bring up only 65 others. It was also ascertained that the Germans were withdrawing troops from the Western Front, probably to meet the Russian offensive.

The general conditions, therefore, under which the British Army was to be launched into its greatest fight, while not entirely favourable, were undoubtedly far more so than those under which previous offensives had been undertaken. As at Loos, the most favourable factor was, probably, the spirit of the new divisions themselves. Of the great British force which, within the last four months, had been concentrated north of the Somme, practically the whole—whether in old formations or new—belonged to the new British army, raised and trained since the outbreak of the war.<sup>47</sup> If there were defects in their training, these were certainly not due to any lack of care or devotion in the officers and men. The troops themselves were still volunteers, inspired by a pure sense of duty and patriotism, high courage, and noble idealism. It may be doubted if any British force was ever launched in battle with so lofty a devotion as that which animated the new army on the Somme in 1916.

By way of an effort to engage the enemy's attention while the preparatory bombardment upon the Somme was imminent or proceeding, orders had on May 28th been issued for feigned preparations of several kinds, but, in particular, trench-raids, to be undertaken on all other parts of the British front. To these minor activities, the proposal for "diverting attacks" previously urged by Joffre was, of necessity, reduced.

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<sup>47</sup> The only "dominion" infantry present on the Somme when the offensive was launched was the magnificent Newfoundland Battalion of the 29th Division.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE RAIDS AT ARMENTIÈRES

BEFORE the orders arrived for the series of raids to be launched in fulfilment of Haig's promise to Joffre,<sup>1</sup> the Australians and New Zealanders had already undertaken several such enterprises. These were partly necessitated by the fact that, although constant attempts were made to capture Germans in No-Man's Land, it was not until May 28th that a prisoner was so taken.<sup>2</sup> By that time each of the brigades in each division had been ordered to prepare a raid, and several of the "teams" had been selected and had begun to practise. It is, however, certain that, apart from the need for identifying the enemy, raids would necessarily have been undertaken in order to give confidence to the troops, encourage a fighting spirit, and, if possible, inflict losses on the enemy and damage the morale of his garrison.

Largely through the bold scouting of Captain Foss and Lieutenant Gill along the enemy's wire near Armentières,<sup>3</sup> the 7th Brigade, to which they belonged, was entrusted with the first of these enterprises. On the night of May 30th Foss, upon his own initiative, while scouting in No-Man's Land west of the point where it was crossed by the railway line from Armentières to Wavrin, and where No-Man's Land was 400 yards wide, had made his way through part of the German entanglement to within fifteen yards of the enemy's parapet. This part of the wire was found to be badly out of repair, and Foss had ascertained that, by making use of certain ditches, it could be approached across No-Man's Land without much exposure. Upon the battalion commanders of

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 220-221.

<sup>2</sup> On that night, the same on which Lieut. Dobie and Cpl. Stephens of the 1st Pioneer Battalion were captured by the enemy (see footnote 24 on p. 134), a private of the 20th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment, who had been out on patrol and had lost himself for two hours in the fog, stumbled into an Australian listening-post, and surrendered. Early in June the Australian patrols redoubled their efforts to cut off enemy patrols, and on the night of the 18th two men of the 16th Bavarian R.I.R., who had thrown bombs at an Australian listening-post, were captured after some fighting by Lieut. H. W. Thomas (of Goodwood, S. Aust.) and a party of the 10th Battalion. On July 3 a patrol of the 3rd Battalion took prisoner a sniper of the 20th Bavarian R.I.R., who was lying out in No-Man's Land in a ditch not far from the Australian lines.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 134.

the 7th Brigade being asked to draw up plans for raids, those of the 26th and 28th Battalions both selected this point. It was accordingly decided that it should be raided, and that the 26th and 28th should each furnish half of the party. Nearly all the officers, however, were provided by the 28th, an outstandingly fine Western Australian battalion.<sup>4</sup> It was decided to attempt an entry into the enemy's line by surprise and in silence rather than after preparatory bombardment with artillery. The silent method, it is true, was much more difficult than formerly, since the enemy was now on the lookout for such raids; it might also entail harder fighting than if the enemy garrison had been previously unnerved by bombardment; but it had advantages, in that the enemy would have no time to flee from his trenches and was likely to be present in greater numbers, and that, the trench not having been damaged, and being manned according to whatever orders were in force in the enemy's lines, the information secured might be more valuable. When, however, the raiders had actually entered the enemy's line, the artillery was to throw a protective barrage round them and maintain it until after they had withdrawn.

Maitland Foss, who was to lead the assault, was a high-spirited officer of fine stature who came from a Western Australian farm. The delicate task of cutting the wire was entrusted to Lieutenant Gill, scout officer of the 28th, and several of his scouts. As the Canadians were the pioneers in enterprises of the kind, two of their officers were borrowed from the 1st Canadian Division to assist in training the team.<sup>5</sup> The raiding party, for which volunteers were called, consisted of six officers and sixty men, divided into two sections, one responsible for the left half of the attack and the other for the right. These were further subdivided into right and left trench-parties, blocking parties, parapet parties, intelligence men, messengers, linesmen and telephonists, scouts, covering parties, stretcher-bearers, and spare men, each with their particular duty. The whole party was withdrawn for a

<sup>4</sup> See *Vol. II*, p. 428.

<sup>5</sup> The first regular trench-raid—in the sense in which the term was afterwards applied—appears to have been undertaken by the 5th and 7th Canadian Battalions near Messines on 16 Nov., 1915. The Canadian officers lent to assist in training the first Australian raiding-team were Lieutenants Connors and Kent.



fortnight to a rear area, and there went into training after the fashion of a football team before an important game. This included a sharp course of physical training, and close practice in carrying out its raid. A replica of the enemy's trench, which had been photographed from aeroplanes, was dug on the training ground, and the operation was rehearsed again and again until it went almost automatically, the chief aim being to accustom the men to work quickly and quietly in the dark.

During the first week in June the artillery of the 2nd Division unostentatiously registered its guns on the sector to be entered. On the evening of June 5th—the date fixed for the raid—the party was given special clothing (English tunics without any badges or distinguishing marks) so that, if any were killed and fell into the enemy's hands, the Germans would at least gain no information from them. To prevent the men's faces and hands from showing up in the dark, they were blackened, and bayonets were painted; and to enable members of the party to recognise each other, they wore on their arms white bands covered with a strip of black cloth, the latter to be ripped off when the attack began. All wore black sand-shoes.<sup>6</sup> The scouts, bombers, carriers, and messengers carried revolvers instead of rifles, and "life-preservers" (or knobkerries—short stout sticks headed with bolts of iron).<sup>7</sup>

The nights were now short, darkness lasting only from 9.30 to 2.15. Gill and his five scouts therefore left the trenches at 9.30 and crawled forward on hands and knees in two lines—three men in each—through the long grass. Their duty was to cut the wire and guide the assault party to it. At 10.15 they were followed by the two trench-parties, two blocking-parties, and parapet-party. Last came the covering party. Meanwhile the scouts had reached the enemy's wire, which was old, ragged, and tied down on stakes with no apparent plan. In order to cut a passage, Gill lay on his back beneath it with his head towards the enemy's trench and the

<sup>6</sup> They were worn to preserve silence, but proved unsuitable, especially in the muddy ditches of No-Man's Land.

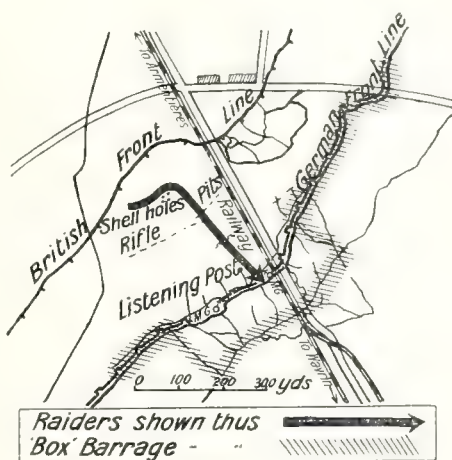
<sup>7</sup> It is doubtful whether, although they appealed to the men, these implements were of much real use, unless for their possible effect in terrifying the enemy. Captain Wilder-Neligan, after perhaps the most brilliant raid that Australians undertook, recommended that knobkerries should in future be dispensed with.

wire across his chest, while his scout corporal, Tozer,<sup>8</sup> lying almost on top of him, pressed the wire down. Gill had adjusted his steel wire-clippers to cut only two-thirds of the way through each strand, so that there should be no "click" to betray the operation. Each wire thus partly severed was easily broken by the hands, and he had cleared a passage almost to the last strands, close in front of the enemy's breastwork, when he observed, no more than five yards away, the yard-high parapet of an enemy listening-post. Over it was peering a man in a spiked helmet. The listener had obviously heard or seen something unusual, for two other heads, wearing round cloth caps, presently appeared beside his. The wire-cutters had evidently run straight into a German listening-post. It soon became clear that they had not been actually seen; but to attempt proceeding farther would mean the certain discovery of the raid, of which the main body was then still assembling in No-Man's Land. Gill and Tozer lay perfectly still for ten minutes, and then wriggled stealthily back, joining up the ends of the cut wire as they did so. The assault party had been waiting in a ditch near some willows in No-Man's Land, and had just begun to crawl forward to its "jumping-off" position when Gill encountered it. The hour was then past 11.30, too late for an attempt to cut the wire at any other point. A message reporting the check was sent to Brigadier-General Paton, who had come up to a special headquarters in the line. By the time it reached him—12.30 a.m.—it was too late to adopt the third possible course and have the raid preluded by a preparatory bombardment, although that alternative had been previously discussed and plans for a bombardment were in existence. Paton accordingly decided to arrange for the attempt to be undertaken the next night after a short bombardment, and the party was withdrawn.

Next morning the medium trench-mortars played on the enemy's wire at the intended point of entry, with the double object of destroying all evidence of the wire having been cut, and of removing the remaining strands. After dark the party, upon whom the twenty-four hours' postponement had laid a

<sup>8</sup> Lieut. H. J. H. Tozer, M.C., M.M.; 28th Bn. Clerk; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Footscray, Vic., 24 March, 1892.

heavy strain, went out at the same time and in the same order as on the night before, and lay up, first at the willows, and later in the forgotten rifle-pits discovered by Foss in a previous scouting expedition. At 11.15, in order to mislead the enemy, the artillery and medium trench-mortars of the 2nd Division, supported by a few heavy pieces, opened suddenly on points a considerable distance north and south of the one to be attacked. At 11.25 the guns were switched on to the objective, and after pounding the trench for ten minutes, lifted their fire to form a "box-barrage" round the position to be raided. The party's orders were to advance to the enemy's trench as soon as this "lift" occurred. Officers and men had as yet, and for long afterwards, insufficient experience to perceive instantly the lift of the field-guns; but fortunately the increase in the range of the trench-mortars, whose bombs had



been falling within sixty yards of the party as it waited, was immediately evident. Amid the wild uproar of bursting shells and the crashes of these big bombs, the party in No-Man's Land at once hurried forwards. Although the bombs (of which twenty-two had been fired) had made a clean sweep of the enemy's wire, it took some two minutes to reach the parapet. Foss crept up the front slope of the breastwork and lay down upon it, the left and right trench-parties and blocking-parties following him, the men lying down to right or left of the leader as each had done in practice, while the covering party under Lieutenant Phillipps<sup>9</sup> extended itself along the edge of the enemy's wire. When the assault party was ready, the men, on a signal from their

<sup>9</sup> Maj. R. C. Phillipps, M.C., D.F.C.; No. 2 Sqn. Aust. Flying Corps. Accountant; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. North Sydney, N.S.W., 1 March, 1892. (He afterwards served with distinction as a pilot in the Australian Flying Corps—see Vol. VIII.)



leader, leapt into the trench. As he crossed the parapet, Foss, looking to the rear of the German lines, which were lit by the shell-flashes as if by a conflagration, saw the barrage bursting on all sides exactly as planned, completely severing the raided area from the rest of the German position.

In some of the raids which followed, especially in the later ones, the intruders found the enemy prepared, and the story is one of hard fighting from the moment of attacking the enemy's trench until after it had been evacuated. In other cases, however, the raiders, having come through No-Man's Land with their lives in their hands, and wrought up by the strain to an intense desire to strike, leapt suddenly into a trench in which the garrison was thoroughly cowed by the bombardment, the bays often being almost bare and the enemy all crouching in the dugouts or in the special shelters from bombardment which the German constructed in his breastwork. The raiders' orders enjoined them, among other things, to inflict as much loss as possible, and their duty was to spend the few allotted minutes in striking at everything around them, killing, wounding, or capturing. The primitive bloodthirstiness which to some extent takes possession of most men in fighting, and especially in close fighting, is probably necessary for the due performance of such tasks. Consequently the details of some of these grim affairs make no pleasant reading.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> This applies to both sides, and to some extent to close fighting in almost any battle. Lest the historian be accused of failing to depict war as it is, an instance may be given from a later operation by another brigade. The raiders, after a check on the wire, which was not thoroughly cut, burst into a German trench which was found practically empty. Some of the raiders, in accordance with their duty, peering into the dark opening of a small shelter under the parapet, caught sight of a face. A shot was fired at it, and a big German was then pulled out by the sergeant in charge of the party; the man pluckily resisted until several more shots had been fired at him, when he sank helpless to the side of the trench. Three other Germans who had been in the same dugout behind him then surrendered, and apparently were spared; but the brave man who had fought was eventually found brained by the knobkerry of some soldier whose lust for blood was not yet satisfied. Such things happened in every army, and, possibly, on one side or the other, in almost every close battle, and are inseparable from the exercise of the primitive instincts.

In the case of raids such as the one in question, the papers from the pockets of the dead had to be brought back for examination by intelligence officers, but were sometimes returned to (or retained by) the finders as *souvenirs*. On this occasion they seem to have included the usual pathetic material—letters from a wife telling her husband "how she has been sending him butter and cakes, and not to worry about her, and wondering why she hasn't heard from him for two days." (The words are quoted from a reference to the raid in a contemporary diary.) Many an Australian, and doubtless many a German, on learning afterwards the contents of such sad documents, hoped inwardly that his was not the bullet or bomb which



This first raid, like most of its successors, was carried through at whirlwind speed, the utmost haste being required if the programme was to be carried out. Raiding parties seldom knew where the enemy would appear, and had to be ready to strike at the first sign of him. On this occasion the Australians, upon first leaping into the position, suffered a sharp surprise; the trench not only appeared at first sight to be deserted, but was utterly different from the replica in which they had practised the operation. This difference was due to the fact, not detected in the air-photographs, that it had no parados, but was a simple breastwork, completely open at the rear. The party, however, leapt down on the duckboards with which, like their own, the "trench" was floored, and at once set about their work. Foss, at the point of entry, found himself standing by a low rectangular dugout, like a large box let into the sandbags of the breastwork. Its doors were open, and at first his electric torch showed him nothing but a heap of blankets, into which he fired. Then, flashing the torch round the low interior, he perceived in a corner a boy with his hands above his head. Foss pulled him out and swung him over the parapet, where he tumbled through the wire into the hands of the scouts who were waiting to receive prisoners. Meanwhile the several parties made their way, according to plan, to right and left, and the blocking parties, in spite of the strangeness of the trenches, quickly found the "communication trenches" which they had been detailed to obstruct. One was a mere shallow cut leading to a path screened with hurdles; the other had a breastwork on one side only. Hardly any Germans were seen. Two, probably messengers, came running up the trench in the dark, and were

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brought tragedy and despair into the loving hearts whose feelings were therein outpoured. Evidence of this can be found in soldiers' letters. During the heavy fighting which occurred later at Pozieres, for example, a man of the 8th Bn., Private J. Bourke (school teacher; of Black Range, near Stawell, Vic.), found in the lower chamber of "Gibraltar" dugout "a heap of cake boxes . . . of cardboard and sewn in with calico, just as the parcels come to us from Australia. The addresses (so he wrote to his mother) were in a child's handwriting as were also one or two letters. In another corner was a coat rolled up. I opened it out, and found it stained with blood, and there, right between the shoulders, was a burnt shrapnel hole—shrapnel is very hot. . . . The owner of the coat was a German, and, some might say, not entitled to much sympathy. Perhaps he was not, but I couldn't help thinking sadly of the little girl or boy who sent the cakes." Of necessity men become temporarily hardened to killing in war-time, except when such reminders bring home to them the full import in some individual case. But, however justifiable, and indeed necessary, the killing of men in war-time may be, soldiers seldom care in after days to recall those scenes even in their thoughts, much less to speak of them.

bayoneted. The rest during the bombardment had apparently taken shelter in dugouts below the parapet, similar to that found by Foss, and had not yet come out again. As each dugout was reached by the right or left trench party, a bomb was rolled into it and exploded; but what number of the enemy were inside, or were killed or wounded by the explosion, there was no time to ascertain. Only one German showed signs of resistance, and he, reaching for his rifle, was shot. Two, who had been captured but failed instantly to respond to some order, were killed. As only seven minutes were allowed for the completion of the task, the parties worked with extreme speed. Both had, however, finished their duty of searching and clearing the trench for about thirty yards in each direction, when Foss fired from his Very pistol a green flare, the signal to return.<sup>11</sup> The men quickly gathered at the point of entry and then passed silently over the parapet into No-Man's Land. Foss, casting a glance over the German hinterland, could see no sign of enemy movement or rifle-fire from the German support line, which was still lit with the flashes of the British shells playing on it like summer lightning. No machine-gun was firing on No-Man's Land. The Australian scouts had meanwhile laid a luminous tape along the route for the return, and, guided by this, the party reached in one rush the rifle-pits, and, in a second rush a few minutes later, the ditch by the willows which had been the original lying-up position. Here, as the German artillery was still bursting heavily on the Australian parapet ahead of him, Foss ordered his men to pause. The enemy had at first been entirely deceived by the feint bombardments north and south of the point of entry. His artillery had opened heavily not long after the Australian, but first to the south, then to the north, and later all over that part of the front. Although this fire appeared somewhat wild, it had cut off the raiders from telephone communication with their headquarters, the lines which they took forward having been broken by the concussion of shells.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> This signal was to be given by two methods, the firing of a flare and the blowing of a whistle. In the uproar of the action the whistle was not generally heard. Each signal was, however, used with success in subsequent raids.

<sup>12</sup> When the enemy sent up flares calling for artillery support, an endeavour was made to confuse him by sending up similar flares from other parts of the Australian front. The German staff, however, had provided its troops with a yellow flare, which whirled rapidly along a serpentine course and could not be imitated.

Thus far the raiders had suffered no casualties. Some six Germans had been killed in the enemy's trench, and Gill's scouts, searching for the listening-post into which they had run on the previous night, had found in it the remains of at least one man killed by the trench-mortar bombs. In addition three prisoners belonging to the 231st Reserve Infantry Regiment of the 50th Reserve Division were being brought back. At this stage, as often happened, the first Australian casualties occurred. As the party and its prisoners lay in the ditch waiting to return, one of the scattered shells of the enemy's artillery chanced to burst among them, killing two Australians and wounding four. In addition, in the Australian trenches, although the garrison had been purposely thinned in expectation of the enemy's retaliation, more than twenty of the sentries or others were killed or wounded,<sup>13</sup> presumably in consequence of the absence of proper shelter. The German staff and troops, unlike the British, pursued a policy of extreme economy, and spared no pains to protect the trench-garrison from such avoidable losses, a difference of practice which had important consequences, and of which the roots lay deep in the respective national characters.

Such was the first Australian raid into the German trenches. Unlike the German enterprises of May 5th and 30th, it had been preceded by a comparatively short and light bombardment, almost entirely carried out by field-artillery.<sup>14</sup> The enemy's trenches had apparently not been damaged except on the flanks, where trench-mortar bombs had blown down portions of the breastwork. This initial operation against the Germans had been awaited with no small anxiety, and the confidence of the Australian infantry was undoubtedly increased by the fact that some of their mates had now been in the enemy's line, and that their artillery had dealt with him as it pleased.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Lieut. W. Murdoch (of Cambridge, Tas.), a trench-mortar officer, was among those killed.

<sup>14</sup> About 5,000 shells were expended during the whole operation, including a short burst of fire upon the German trench some hours after the operation, when it was conjectured that the enemy's working parties would be repairing their battered defences.

<sup>15</sup> The raiding party was given leave to London, and exaggerated reports of this and other Anzac operations reached the press (though not through the accredited British or Australian war-correspondents). In an endeavour to correct these, the official Australian correspondent telegraphed: "I am constantly asked by many Anzac officers and men to state again . . . that the Anzac troops do not claim or desire the public attention which has been directed to these small feats. They



In the following week—early in the morning of June 13th—a raid was undertaken on the front of the 1st Division by the 6th Battalion. The chosen objective was a length of the enemy's trench between two of his strong-points, known as "The Lozenge" and "The Angle,"<sup>16</sup> west of Le Bridoux, that point being selected because the enemy's wire there appeared to be thin. This entanglement was to be destroyed by the medium



trench-mortars at 5 o'clock in the afternoon of June 12th, and the raid itself was to take place at 1 a.m. It was to be preceded by a ten-minutes' artillery bombardment of the objective. To deceive the enemy as to the point of entry, other bombardments were to be laid upon all his other strong-points in the neighbourhood, part of the artillery of the 2nd Division assisting. The raiding party, for which over 400 volunteered, numbered about fifty, comprising two trench-parties,<sup>17</sup> under Lieutenants Hyde<sup>18</sup> and Laughlin<sup>19</sup> respectively, together with scouts, parapet-bombers, and a support party of twenty-two. It was to be equipped practically in the same manner as that of the 7th Brigade, and was physically trained and practised on a facsimile of the enemy's trenches, which had been reproduced, eight feet deep, at the divisional bomb-school. In this raid parties of bombers were

are doing their work honestly and well, but in a quiet part of the line which bears not the faintest resemblance to the awkward corners, such as the Ypres Salient, held by British troops for nearly two years. An officer of one of the Anzac battalions expressed what is the general feeling of the whole force when he said to me to-day, referring to the tremendous bombardment which we heard throughout this week from the far north—'It is the Canadians who should be in the limelight now.'"

<sup>16</sup> Air-photographs of this area showing the actual track of the raiders, and the effect of the box barrage, are printed in *Vol. XII, plates 187-188*.

<sup>17</sup> Each trench-party comprised 3 bayonet men, 2 bombers, 2 bomb carriers, 3 salvage scouts, and a sergeant.

<sup>18</sup> Lieut. A. J. Hyde; 6th Bn. Jeweller; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. Birmingham, Eng., 13 March, 1889. Killed in action, 4 Oct., 1917.

<sup>19</sup> Capt. A. Laughlin, M.C.; 6th Bn. G.S.O. (3), 1st Aust. Div., 1918. Student; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Carlton, Vic., 23 Jan., 1893.



to advance along the parapet, throwing a protecting curtain of bombs into the trench ahead of the trench-parties. The support party would lie in No-Man's land protecting the rear and flanks.

The night proved very wet. There was a half-moon, and in the extreme darkness which followed its setting, at 12.30, the party left its own trench and crept half-way across No-Man's Land (at this point 220 yards wide), where it lay-up near the summit of a slight rise which here intervened between the opposing lines. A German working party could then be heard hammering stakes near The Angle; but at 12.50, immediately after the raiders reached their lying-out position, the Australian artillery opened the preparatory bombardment, and the hammering ceased. As the raiders lay under the swish and crash of the shells it was observed that one gun was firing short, but fortunately a little to the flank, its shell periodically exploding a few yards to the right of the party and throwing earth over them. At 1 o'clock the guns immediately covering the party lifted their range from the German parapet, so as to throw their shells 100 yards farther forward, and the raiders in double file made for the point of entry. Here the battalion intelligence officer, Lieutenant Rogers,<sup>20</sup> who, compass in hand, was leading, came upon an unexpected obstacle, sometimes met with in subsequent raids. Although Lieutenant Laughlin had spent two nights examining the German wire, and had found it to be thin, there existed a farther belt which he had not discovered. This lay close in front of the German parapet, in a wide ditch or borrow-pit, from which earth had originally been taken in order to cover the front slope of the breastwork. The wire-entanglement in this ditch was about three feet high, partly on stakes and partly on "knife-rests," and had not been thoroughly cut by the bombardment. The advancing party "bunched" against it dangerously, illuminated by flares which the enemy was sending up at some distance on either flank. The left trench-party was held up in the wire, but Lieutenant Laughlin, the leader, struggled through and reached the parapet alone. A

<sup>20</sup> Capt. J. D. Rogers, M.C.; 6th Bn. G.S.O. (3), Aust. Corps, 1918. University student; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Penguin, Tas., 29 April, 1895.

German was there, and shot him in the thigh, but Laughlin fired back with his revolver and the man was either killed or had fled. The rest of the party presently struggled through and, lining up, leapt into the trench. It was then found that Rogers had led them to precisely the point at which the party in its practices had entered the replica trenches; every bay and bend of the German line appeared familiar. The trench was provided with a *parados*, was floored with boards like a house, and was noticeably clean and dry. At first only one German was seen, and a shot was fired after him as he ran away. But the traverses contained the usual dugouts—of two sorts: one type, sleeping or living quarters, some of them empty except for blankets or equipment hurriedly left; the other, narrow ledges for temporary shelter from bombardment. From one protruded a leg, the owner of which was pulled out and, imploring “*Mercy, Kamerad!*”, “*Me come, Kamerad!*”, was bundled roughly from man to man until he reached Lieutenant Hyde, who, receiving him more gently, passed him over the parapet to the men waiting for prisoners. Two of these rushed him across No-Man’s Land. The men stationed at the sally-port in the Australian lines saw three men emerge from the darkness—A voice said: “*Here’s a bastard!*”, and into the waiting group was thrust a scared, mud-bespattered German whose guard disappeared again into No-Man’s Land.

The little bombardment-shelters in the German trenches were in some cases designed to be closed by a metal door or plate, running in a slot. One, partly out of its slide, was wrenched away by the raiders, and there was found behind it an elderly bearded man, who was made prisoner. Another could not be opened, and it is probable that a party of Germans lay hidden there throughout the raid, and so escaped. In later enterprises such closed doors were sometimes blown open by the engineers accompanying trench-parties.<sup>21</sup> During this raid a telephone was successfully

<sup>21</sup> The Germans had electric lighting in their trenches opposite Armentières and possibly also here. Near the limit of the left party’s advance a bright beam shone through the open door of a dugout. A bomb was thrown, and the light went out, but was re-lit. Half-a-dozen more bombs were then thrown in, but the place was not examined, as at that juncture a runner arrived with the message for the party’s

established on the enemy's parapet, Captain Moncur,<sup>22</sup> in charge of the attack, thus being able to communicate with his battalion commander in the Australian lines throughout the enterprise. He duly sent a code message to warn the artillery that the party was about to return, and that the guns should prepare to shorten range again. Up to the time of withdrawal the raiders were not seen or fired at from other parts of the enemy's line, and the scouts had been busy clearing a passage for the return through the entanglement. At this stage, however, the party was apparently discovered by the light of the German flares, which were now rising in sheaves. Rifles flashed from The Angle, and shots could be seen flicking the rain from the wet grass close to the retiring men. A stretcher-bearer<sup>23</sup> was dangerously wounded as they left the trench, and during the original advance Lieutenant Rogers and a signaller<sup>24</sup> had been slightly touched by Australian shells—an incident often unavoidable if the infantry followed as boldly and closely as was advisable upon the bursts of its own artillery. Except for the few casualties mentioned, the raiders on this occasion came off scathless. Of the Germans, six were brought back as prisoners, and it was estimated that twelve had been killed.<sup>25</sup> The bombardment accompanying this raid involved an expenditure of not more than 2,500 shells, mainly of field-artillery. The enemy replied feebly, apparently with two batteries of field-guns and one of 5.9 inch howitzers.

Four nights later the New Zealand Division undertook its first raid at a point near Quatre Hallots Farm, east of

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recall. A trench-mortar was found in this raid, apparently in its firing-position, at the junction of a communication trench and the front line. A couple of bombs were burst in the barrel and underneath the gun. It was known that a machine-gun also would be found, its position having previously been observed by Rogers and his scouts. It was duly discovered—apparently clamped by the enemy into a fixed position to fire obliquely along No-Man's Land—and was hauled, together with its bed-plate, part of the way across No-Man's Land, where it had to be abandoned.

<sup>22</sup> Capt. P. D. Moncur, M.C.; 6th Bn. Blacksmith; of Melbourne; b. Drouin, Vic., 14 Dec., 1889.

<sup>23</sup> Pte. S. A. McKenzie (No. 732; 6th Bn.). Printer; of Melbourne; b. Richmond, Vic., 1895.

<sup>24</sup> Pte. (afterwards Lieut.) H. W. Higgs, 6th Bn. Actor; of Darlinghurst, N.S.W.; b. Potts Point, N.S.W., 1891.

<sup>25</sup> A report of the 50th (Prussian) Reserve Division gives its losses as 11 dead, 20 wounded, and 6 missing.

Armentières. This place was chosen because the Germans had been making a new trench (known as "The Break-water") closing a re-entrant and bringing their line much closer to that of the New Zealanders. Photographs taken from aeroplanes showed that certain other works, possibly trenches for the assembly of troops about to attack, were in progress behind the enemy's lines. This led General White to infer that the Germans might be creating a "jumping-off" position for a possible local attack, similar to those which they had been making at Ypres.

The details of the enterprise by which this theory was to be tested need not be related, except in so far as they differed from those of the raids already described. The selected party was trained with very great care; but unfortunately, when the bombardment<sup>26</sup> lifted, the gallant leader of the assault, Captain Alley,<sup>27</sup> dashing forward to enter the trench, was mortally wounded by the burst of a New Zealand shell, the same explosion wounding Lieutenant White,<sup>28</sup> leader of the right trench-party. A third officer, Lieutenant Espiner,<sup>29</sup> was hit before the commencement of the advance, which was thus made under a heavy handicap. Nevertheless the new trench was entered and found to be unfinished and destitute of any regular garrison. Two listeners, or snipers, however, were met with and bayoneted, and the party came upon four others, all dead. No prisoners were secured, and the report of the raiders did not, of course, definitely disprove the probability of a German attack in the near future. But careful observations made about the same time by the staff of the heavy artillery showed that the enemy, though his guns had been for a time more active, was not adding to his heavy pieces, but, on the contrary, apparently withdrawing a few of them.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The preparatory bombardment on this occasion lasted for twenty minutes.

<sup>27</sup> Capt. E. B. Alley; 2nd Bn., Otago Regt. Farmer; of Lumsden, N.Z.; b. Springfield, N.Z., 4 Dec., 1892. Died of wounds, 17 June, 1916.

<sup>28</sup> Capt. A. T. White, M.C.; 2nd Bn., Wellington Regt. Schoolmaster; of Shannon, N.Z.; b. Newton, N.Z., 26 July, 1878.

<sup>29</sup> Lieut. R. H. Espiner; 2nd Bn., Wellington Regt. Schoolmaster; of New Plymouth, N.Z.; b. Palmerston North, N.Z., 7 Aug., 1895.

<sup>30</sup> Possibly this was done in order to strengthen his artillery north of the Somme, where the projected English and French attack was about this time beginning to be apprehended by the enemy.



The three enterprises above described proved that the 24th (Saxon) Division, the 50th (Prussian) Reserve Infantry Division, and the 6th (Bavarian) Reserve Infantry Division were still opposite the front of the New Zealand and 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions respectively. No other raids had been undertaken<sup>31</sup> by the I Anzac Corps when the time arrived for carrying out the order for the important series intended to divert the enemy's attention during the preparation for the offensive on the Somme.<sup>32</sup> The order issued by Haig on May 28th, after referring to the possibility of another much more important feint,<sup>33</sup> laid down that—

The First, Second, and Third Armies will take steps to deceive the enemy as to the real front of attack, to wear him out, and reduce his fighting efficiency both during the three days prior to the assault and during the subsequent operations. . . . Preparations for deceiving the enemy should be made without delay. . . . This will be effected by means of—

- (a) Preliminary preparations such as advancing our trenches and saps, construction of dummy assembling trenches, gun emplacements, &c.
- (b) Wire cutting at intervals along the entire front with a view to inducing the enemy to man his defences and causing fatigue.

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<sup>31</sup> The 7th Brigade had been ordered to launch a second raid on the night of June 18, the party being chosen from the 25th and 27th Battalions. On this occasion the preparatory bombardment was in full swing, when, at 12.23, the telephonist in the Australian trenches received from the commander of the party in No-Man's Land the message "Cease fire." When the batteries had stopped firing it was learnt that the officer commanding the raiders had observed an enemy machine-gun, immediately to the north of the intended point of entry, firing along the enemy's wire-entanglement. This fire had continued, apparently quite unaffected, during the preliminary bombardment, and, when the artillery lifted, the scout officer could see the bullets striking sparks from the wire about eighty yards ahead of the party. Another machine-gun was sweeping No-Man's Land from the right. The raid commander, being convinced that the enterprise had been anticipated by the enemy and would involve useless loss, brought his party back. It is possible that—as certainly occurred on some future occasions—the recent raids, and the preliminary cutting of the German wire by the trench-mortars, had caused the enemy to suspect that a raid would be made on this point, and that he had made preparations to receive it. The reply of the enemy's artillery to the Australian bombardment was, however, very slow, and gave little evidence of having been previously arranged. The scout officer, Lieutenant R. D. Southon (of Adelaide, S. Aust.) asked if the attempt could be repeated the following night, after two minutes' bombardment, so that the party might rush the trench before the machine-guns had time to open; but the suggestion was not approved, and this raid was accordingly abandoned.

<sup>32</sup> G.H.Q.'s first order for raids with the object of "mystifying the enemy and disorganising his plans" appears to have been issued on May 18, the intention being to deliver as many of these attacks as possible on the night of June 3. This order was, however, cancelled on May 29 in order to avoid "disturbing the front" so soon before the offensive.

<sup>33</sup> See note on p. 323.

- (c) Gas discharges, where possible, at selected places along the whole British front, accompanied by a discharge of smoke, with a view to causing the enemy to wear his gas helmets and inducing fatigue and causing casualties.
- (d) Artillery barrages on important communications with a view to rendering reinforcement, relief, and supply difficult.
- (e) Bombardment of rest billets by night.
- (f) Intermittent smoke discharges by day, accompanied by shrapnel fire on the enemy's front defences with a view to inflicting loss.
- (g) Raids by night, of the strength of a company and upwards, on an extensive scale, into the enemy's front system of defences. These to be prepared by intense artillery and trench-mortar bombardments.

On June 14th—evidently after the receipt by Haig of Joffre's appeal for an earlier launching of the Somme offensive—an order was issued that as many raids as possible should be undertaken between June 20th and 25th. Next day, however, this was modified by the instruction that "between the 20th and 30th of June" there was to be, if possible, "a raid each night on the corps front. . . . This means about three per division, and the 4th Brigade of the 4th Division (which was then arriving from Egypt) might do another." Birdwood further suggested: "During the latter part of the period named we might try a raid on a broader front—say that of a company." Similar proposals were being made by all other corps commanders responsible for sectors of the British front in France. Among the suggested programmes, one of more importance than most was that of the commander of the XI Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Haking,<sup>34</sup> who was responsible for the sector immediately south of that held by I Anzac. On June 15th, in putting forward a programme of thirteen enterprises to be undertaken by his army corps, he included in the list one operation of considerably greater importance than the ordinary raids. This was the suggested capture and retention of a salient in the enemy's line known as the "Boar's Head" (about four and a half miles south-west of the flank of the Anzac Corps), which was to be

<sup>34</sup> Gen. Sir Richard Haking, G.B.E., K.C.B., K.C.M.G., p.s.c. Commanded XI Corps, 1915/18. Officer of British Regular Army; b. 24 Jan., 1862.

attacked by the 39th Division on June 26th. He further added a suggestion for a similar, but still larger, operation against the Sugar-loaf Salient, opposite the left of his corps and the right of I Anzac:

I have also prepared an attack with a view to capturing and holding permanently 2,100 yards of the enemy's trenches from the Fauquissart road at N.19.a.4.3 to the enemy's salient at N.8.d.5.3 (*i.e.*, the Sugar-loaf) between which points gas has been installed.<sup>35</sup> . . . . The ammunition supplied will be sufficient to carry out the above programme.

As any attack on the Sugar-loaf would affect the Anzac front, Haking sent a copy of this programme to Birdwood, and promised to give him ample warning if such an enterprise was undertaken. It was subsequently arranged that I Anzac Corps should co-operate by delivering a small attack on a 300-yards' front on Haking's left. In the first programme of raids sent in by General Plumer of the Second Army this operation was set down as the main effort of the I Anzac Corps. The date, however, was to be arranged by Haking, and the attempt did not take place while the I Anzac Corps was at Armentières.

The series of raids actually undertaken by troops of, or attached to, the I Anzac Corps is summarised in the following table. They were begun after the great preparatory bombardment for the Somme battle had opened, and were continued until well after the commencement of the infantry attack. In addition, the artillery was active with "harassing" programmes of its own. In order to prevent the enemy from anticipating the raids, the practice was adopted of blowing the necessary paths through the German wire as far as possible during these "harassing shoots," or when feint bombardments were being laid down for raids other than that for which the path was blown. Before the series of enterprises was ended, the II Anzac Corps with the new Australian divisions from Egypt (as will be explained in due course) arrived, and was taking over the line from I Anzac.

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<sup>35</sup> This apparently refers to the installation of gas in the British trenches.

In the following table the figures given for the German casualties are, in the first place, those reported or estimated by the raiders. The German reports of casualties are added where they are available. It should be borne in mind that the German reports usually include losses inflicted by the artillery upon the whole of the division affected by the raid.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raiders' Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of June 25/26	5th Aust. Inf. Bde. (volun- teers from all bat- talions)	9	73	S.E. of Bois Grenier	30	—	4	1	13	1	Capt. Heritage <sup>36</sup> was O.C. assault. The raiders found themselves unexpectedly faced by a deep ditch containing barbed-wire. The Germans were ready, and were sweeping the ground in front of their trenches with a machine-gun, but the raiders, by keeping low, avoided its fire. Some crossed the ditch and wire by a foot-bridge leading to one of the enemy's listening-posts. The party spent five minutes in the German trenches; the garrison had taken shelter in dugouts, and offered practically no resistance. The engineers blew up two bomb-stores. Lieut. Lane <sup>37</sup> was wounded by a bomb, but most of the casualties were caused by the fire of the German artillery while the raiders were





24. A SHELTER IN PART OF THE LINE REMADE BY THE AUSTRALIAN TROOPS SOUTH OF ARMENTIÈRES

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ53.*



25. MESSINES IN JULY 1915

The British front line is in the foreground, the German front line beyond the trees.

*British Official Photograph (taken by Field Survey personnel).*

*To face p. 260.*



26. AIR-PHOTOGRAPH OF BARRAGE AND SMOKE CLOUD (WHITE) COVERING  
A GERMAN *flammenwerfer* ATTACK

*German Air Force Photograph.  
Taken apparently in 1916.*

*To face p. 261.*

as 13 dead,  
25 wounded,  
4 missing

withdrawing, when the enemy appeared to direct his shell-fire on to No-Man's Land. A telephone was carried through to the enemy's parapet, and communication was maintained with the Australian trenches throughout the raid. The enemy evidently organised a speedy counter-attack, but just too late, since two minutes after the raiders had left he could be seen bombing his way back along his own trenches. The raid was the occasion of an act of signal gallantry by an Australian soldier on behalf of his comrades. A young private of the 17th Battalion, William Jackson<sup>38</sup>—a boy who had joined at the age of seventeen from the back country of New South Wales—after escorting a prisoner across No-Man's Land, was carrying wounded men from between the trenches under heavy shell-fire, when—on his third journey—he was terribly wounded in the arm. Two of his mates, however, were still lying in front of the trench, and he again went out to search for them.<sup>39</sup> The war-diary of the 50th (Prussian) Reserve Division states that at 12 (midnight) the 220th R.I.R. drove back with grenades two raiding parties, each of 20 men; that half-an-hour later the

<sup>38</sup> Capt. K. Heritage, M.C.; 19th Bn. Traffic manager, Union S.S. Co. of N.Z.; of Launceston and Strahan, Tas.; b. Longford, Tas., 16 Sept., 1882. Killed in action, 26 July, 1916.

<sup>37</sup> Capt. J. B. Lane, D.S.O.; 18th Bn. Managing law clerk; of Strathfield, N.S.W.; b. Petersham, N.S.W., 7 Jan., 1886.

<sup>38</sup> Pte. W. Jackson, V.C. (No. 588; 17th Bn). Farmer; of Merriwa, N.S.W.; b. Gunbar, N.S.W., 13 Sept., 1897.

<sup>39</sup> For this action Jackson was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raiders' Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of June 25/26	3rd N.Z. Inf. Bde.	3	72	East of Pont Ballot	29	—	9	2	8	—	<p>231st R.I.R. drove back a party which attempted to cut through its wire; but that another party succeeded in entering, and captured 4 prisoners. The artillery-fire covering the raid rendered some of the German trenches impassable. The German commanders did not know whether their trenches had been entered or the prisoners taken from a listening-post.</p> <p>Scouts who went into No-Man's Land immediately before the raid heard an enemy working-party repairing the wire-entanglement at the point where it had been breached for this enterprise. The preliminary bombardment lasted fifteen minutes, and the enemy wire was well cut; but raiders had some difficulty in getting out of the "borrow-pit" in front of the enemy's trench, though it was dry. The German trenches were found full of the enemy (including some of his working party),</p>



Night of June 26/27	5th Aust. Inf. Bde. (18th Bn.)	6	73	S.E. of Bois Grenier	60	4	4	—	14	1	<p>who offered practically no resistance. A large number were shot down or bombed (in accordance with the definite orders for this raid, which limited the number of prisoners to be taken).<sup>40</sup> The raiders remained fifteen minutes, and found a mine-shaft and a pump, both of which were blown up. No casualties occurred among them until they were recrossing No-Man's Land, where one New Zealander was killed by the explosion of a stick-bomb, which he was bringing back, the same explosion wounding three others. In this raid the telephone lines, though carried forward, were cut—probably by shell-fire—and thus proved useless.</p> <p>This raiding party met with hard fighting throughout the enterprise. Some hours before the raid the enemy, happening to bombard the Bridoux Salient, had prevented the trench-mortar ammunition from being brought up to cut the wire. The raid was accordingly postponed for an hour and a half. At midnight the preliminary bombardment (which had been intended to take place at 10.30) was for five minutes laid on the trenches to be raided, the trench-mortars</p>
											<p>belonged to the 24th Division (133rd Regiment)</p> <p>The dead include those killed by the artillery-fire. Prisoners belonged to the 50th Reserve Division (230th Regiment)</p>

<sup>40</sup> An instruction to take only three prisoners, though rarely issued in a written order, was on several occasions virtually given to troops. This was not in accordance with the spirit of the rules of war, nor with the general practice of British, Australian, or New Zealand commanders or troops.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raiders' Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of June 26/27					The report of that division gives the true loss in all sectors as: 13 dead, 23 wounded, 4 missing						<p>The artillery then remained quiet for an hour and a half, when it opened again for five minutes. The raiders, led by Capt. Bruce,<sup>41</sup> advanced, but found the wire not entirely destroyed, and a short time was occupied in cutting through it. The Germans met the advance at the parapet with bombs, and the first attack failed; but the party re-formed in the "borrow-pit," with the enemy throwing his bombs overhead, and attacked again. The Germans used no machine-gun, the one which had been expected to fire having apparently been smashed in the bombardment. Bruce with his revolver shot a German, and the party entered the trench and went along it, bombing six dugouts. While they were doing so, a counter-attacking party was seen coming over the open in rear of the trenches, led by a German with a revolver, but bombs were thrown at them and the leader killed. After</p>

nine-and-a-half minutes the Australians withdrew. It was found that a wounded man had been left in the hands of the enemy, who next day put up a notice to say that he was being well cared for "and is hopeful" (*sic*).

This raid was led by Capt. Philip Howell-Price.<sup>42</sup> As Gen. Birdwood desired some variation in the nature of the raids, a somewhat protracted bombardment (for seventeen minutes) had been asked for, under cover of which the infantry intended to cut the German wire by means of a "Bangalore torpedo"—that is, a tube filled with high-explosive—which was to be taken across No-Man's Land, pushed beneath the wire, and exploded. The artillery commander, however, pointed out that the protraction of the bombardment would give the enemy a clue as to the point of entry. This method was therefore, at the last moment, rejected in favour of a five-minutes' preparatory bombardment, and the wire had to be cut by trench-mortars on the afternoon before the raid. Unfortunately this proceeding also appears to have given warning to the enemy, for within two or three minutes of the opening of the

Night of June 28/29	1st Aust. Inf. Bde. (1st Bn.)	4	58	East of Petillon	9-15	—	2	1	10	—	
					The prisoners belonged to the 20th Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment. (The Bavarian account states that losses that night were 19 killed, 36 wounded, 2 missing. But some of these were probably incurred in repelling an unsuccessful						

<sup>41</sup> Maj. H. L. Bruce, M.C.; 18th Bn. Architectural student; of Inverell, N.S.W.; b. Bowning, N.S.W., 18 Aug., 1891.

<sup>42</sup> Maj. P. L. Howell-Price, D.S.O., M.C.; 1st Bn. Bank clerk; of Richmond, N.S.W.; b. Mount Wilson, N.S.W., 11 Sept., 1894. Killed in action, 4 Oct., 1917.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raiders' Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of June 28/29	7th Aust. Inf. Bde. (25th and 27th Bns.)	4	58	Near "Ontario Farm," west of Messines	15	—	4	1	5	—	Australian bombardment the German artillery replied heavily. The German barbed-wire was found not to have been completely cut (the obstructions consisted of trip-wire; behind that, wire on knife-rests; next coils of barbed-wire; and, lastly, a ditch with wire in it); and the raiders reached the enemy trench at a different point from that intended. The several parties were consequently unable to work precisely as they had rehearsed. Nevertheless they entered the trench and found several dugouts with the usual metal doors, which were open. They reported that they had killed at least nine Germans, and probably more, and brought back two prisoners. (The Bavarians record that one raider was found dead in their position.)
											This raid was not on the I Anzac front, but on that of the 24th British Division (V Corps) before Messines, to which the 7th Brigade had then just been transferred ( <i>see p. 324</i> ). It was

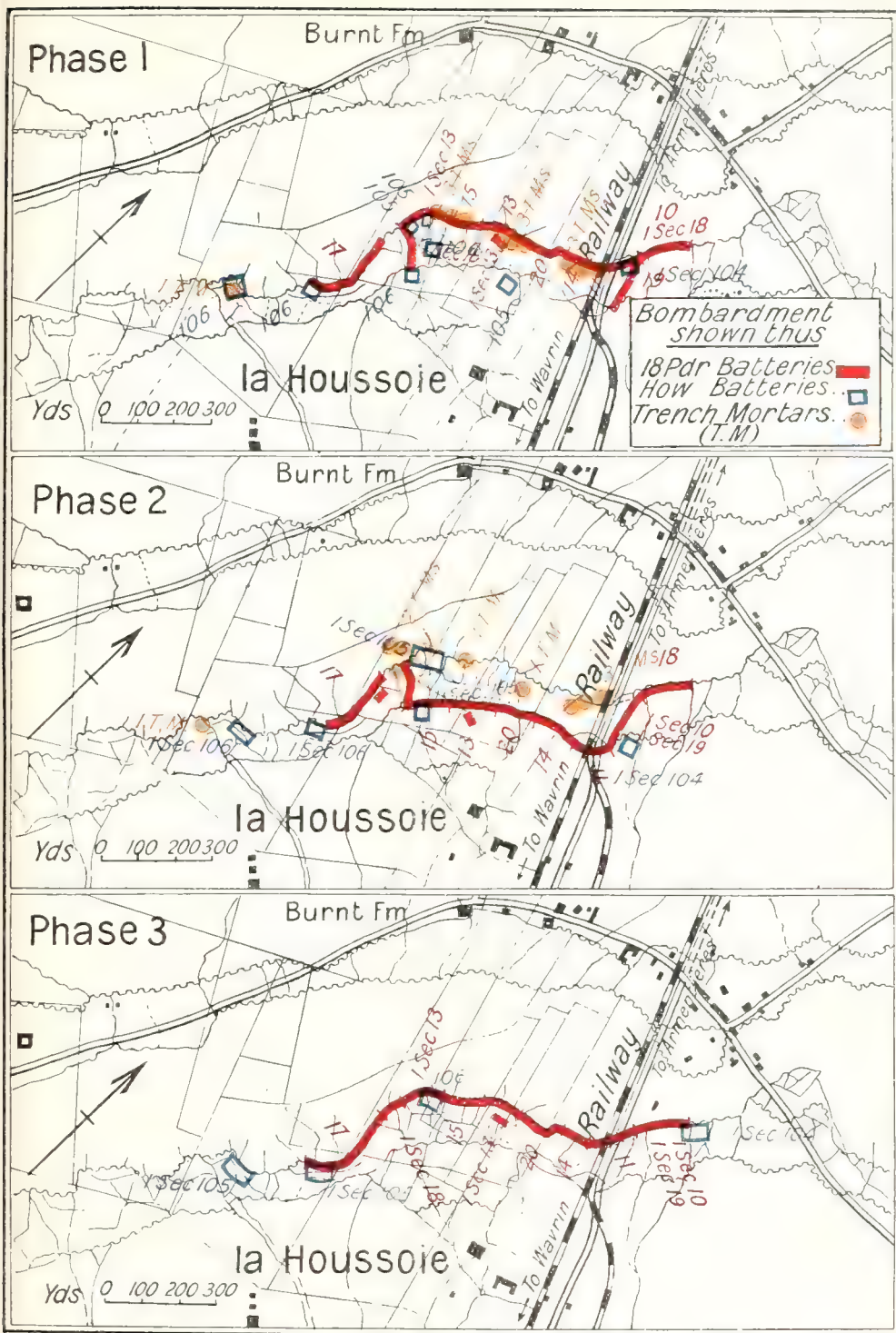


Night of June 29/30	6th Aust. Inf. Bde. (all bat-talions)	One Company	S.W. of the Armentières-Wavrin railway	82	—	5	8	21	3	<p>hurriedly arranged as part of a triple raid in which the 17th and 72nd British Brigades also joined. The 25th and 27th Battalions (which were to have undertaken the abortive raid of June 19) supplied the Australian party, under Captain Page.<sup>43</sup> The enterprise was to have followed a discharge of gas, but the wind was unfavourable and gas was not released that night. The attack was preceded by a ten-minutes' bombardment. The enemy offered no resistance. Page was wounded, probably by a fragment of one of the supporting trench-mortar bombs. In the trenches of the 7th Brigade 2 officers and 27 men were wounded by the bombardment with which the enemy replied.</p>

<sup>43</sup> Maj. H. H. Page, D.S.O., M.C.; 25th Bn. Civil servant; of Sydney; b. Grafton, N.S.W., 8 Aug., 1888.

<sup>44</sup> Lieut.-Col. A. R. L. Wiltshire, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.C. Commanded 22nd Bn., 1917/10. Bank accountant; of Burma. Vic.; b. Longwood, Vic., 28 May, 1891.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raiders' Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of June 29/30							division gives the true loss in (all sectors) as: 32 dead, 73 wounded, 6 missing, 1 shell-shocked				20 during a feint bombardment intended to assist another operation, and the gaps had since been kept open by turning machine-gun and shrapnel-fire upon them at night, so as to prevent German working-parties from repairing them. It had been intended to cover the attack with a discharge of smoke, but the wind was unfavourable. The full preparatory bombardment lasted only four minutes, the guns then lengthening their range, not simultaneously (when the enemy might have observed the change), but gradually during the course of a minute. German prisoners afterwards expressed surprise at the shortness of the bombardment, but the attack itself seems to have been expected. The operation really comprised three simultaneous raids on separate points, and all parties met with opposition. On the right the 23rd found the wire uncut, the trench-mortar bombs having fallen beyond it



#### TYPICAL ARTILLERY BARRAGE FOR A TRENCH RAID

The barrage here shown is that covering the triple raid by the 6th Brigade south-west of Armentières on the night of 29-30 June 1916. The trenches at the top of each map are the British; those below are the German. The map of Phase 1 shows the trench-mortars cutting wire opposite the three points of entry. In Phase 2 the "box" is formed, and the infantry enters in the three spaces between the trench-mortar bursts. Phase 3 is after the withdrawal of the raiders. The batteries or sections firing are shown by the numbers (in colour); thus "1 sec. 10" means "one section (two guns) of the 10th Battery"; "3 T.M.'s" means "3 medium trench-mortars."





and on the parapet. However, by hacking through part of the wire and entering a German listening-post, a way was found into the trench. The Germans from the listening-post were seen running away along the parapet, but the raiders, on reaching the breastwork, were received with grenades. They climbed over and found four dugouts, which they bombed. They could stay only five minutes in the trench, and claim to have killed 40 of the enemy, but this estimate was very uncertain. The centre party (22nd) found the wire partly cut, and the scouts hacked a way through it. The "borrow-pit," however, was deep and sticky, and contained wire on spiked stakes. This caused five minutes' delay, and only half the party crossed. The bombing parties entered the trench and turned right and left, bombing the enemy. Some of these were in their dugouts, where one of them who showed fight was killed. It was thought that the Germans were driven by these parties into the fire of the trench-mortars. One prisoner was taken, but he appears to have escaped or been killed. The 24th, on the left, was faced with a ditch full of water and containing barbed-wire. It took a minute to get through it. In this case also the enemy appears to have fought on his parapet, and there was a temporary

Date— 1916,	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raiders' Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.		Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	
Night of June 29/30										falling back through the signal to retire (the word "bunk") having been given by some unauthorised person. The party was rallied, and re-entered the trenches. Dugouts were bombed, and it was estimated that 50 Germans were killed, although on the left they continued to resist, firing over the parapet of a communication trench. Six prisoners were taken, but one escaped when his guard was re-crossing the ditch in No-Man's Land. Four of the 24th were killed in the enemy's trench, and a fifth during the retirement by the fire of a machine-gun, which played on the barbed-wire in front of the trench. Except for the three missing men, all the dead and wounded of all parties were carried back in spite of much trouble in re-crossing the ditch—a very gallant feat. This raid—the most important of the Anzac series—involved an expenditure of about 8,000 shells, mainly of field-artillery, and 1,000 trench-mortar bombs.

Night of June 30- July 1	1st Aust. Inf. Bde. (4th Bn.)	1	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	The report of the 50th (Prussian) Reserve Division states that two raiding parties entered and others were repulsed. The fighting was "of a very severe nature." The attempt of the raiders to blow up concrete machine-gun positions "partly succeeded." The raiders were seen searching No-Man's Land for their wounded until dawn, and further losses were inflicted on them.
Night of July 1/2	1st N.Z. Inf. Bde. (Wellington Bn.)	3	76	North of Wez Macquart	15	—	10	1	8	On this night gas was to have been released on the front of the 4th Battalion by troops of one of the "special units" of Royal Engineers. After the discharge a party of the 4th was to advance and ascertain the effect. The wind proved unfavourable, and the enterprise was not carried out. The New Zealand Division, however, released some gas this night.

The preparatory bombardment for this raid lasted twenty minutes. The trench-mortars were employed exclusively for cutting the enemy's wire. As great difficulty had been found in maintaining communication in some of the previous raids (the telephone wires having been cut by the enemy's counter-bombardment), parallel wires were laid for this occasion and connected by cross-wires like the rungs of a ladder. By this means, in spite

Prisoners belonged to the 139th and 229th Regiments (24th, and 50th Res. Divs.). The losses in the 50th Res.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raider's Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of July 1/2					Div. from all causes are given, in its report, as 9 dead, 21 wounded, 5 missing						of local breaks, communication was maintained throughout. The raiding party found the enemy's entanglement thoroughly destroyed. The centre party entered the German trench through a sap leading in from a listening-post. The Germans were found in a cowed condition, sheltering low behind their parapet, and showed no fight. Fifteen were killed, but the report of the raid states that, although only this number was actually counted, "there must have been many more" killed by the artillery. The raiding party had entered at a point where the 139th and 229th German Regiments—24th (Saxon) and 50th Reserve (Prussian) Divisions—joined, and prisoners were captured from both. When returning, the New Zealand stretcher-bearers had difficulty in re-crossing a ditch near their own parapet. The leader of the party, Capt. McColl, <sup>45</sup> accordingly went back to



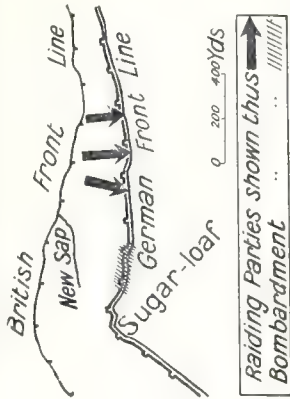
assist them and, having done so, was returning over the parapet when he was caught by the fire of an enemy machine-gun and mortally wounded.

Probably the most brilliantly executed of this series of raids. It was organised and led by Capt. Wilder-Neligan (who, as Sergt. Wilder, had already distinguished himself at Anzac). In further pursuance of Gen. Birdwood's wish that the methods should be varied, it was decided that the raid should be a "silent" one—that is to say, undertaken without preparatory bombardment. The only assistance required of the artillery before the moment of entry was that of the trench-mortars in previously cutting the enemy's wire, and a feint bombardment of the field-guns and howitzers on a sector a quarter of a mile to the right of the raiders, the object being to deceive the enemy as to the point of entry.

The objective was a sector north-east of the Sugar-loaf Salient. No-Man's Land was there 300 yards wide, but the locality was chosen because it contained the emplacement of a certain enemy machine-gun which had caused much loss and annoyance. The entry was to

4	144	South of Fleur- baix	53	—	21	7	26	—
			(according to German account :—					
			14	40	25			

<sup>45</sup> Capt. A. B. McColl; 1st Bn., Wellington Regt. Died of wounds, 2nd July, 1916.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raider's Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of July 1/2											<p>be effected by three parties at three points, each about 200 yards distant from the next, this plan being adopted</p>  <p>in order to minimise the chance of losses through the enemy's enflading fire. The parties were chosen from volunteers, and comprised:—<sup>46</sup></p> <p>Left Party. Centre Party. Right Party.  Lient. Ramkema<sup>48</sup> Capt.  Young<sup>47</sup> Benson<sup>49</sup>  and 46 others and 58 others and 46 others  Commander: Capt. Wilder-Neligan  with two telephonists and two messengers.</p>

The enemy's wire had been thoroughly patrolled. Capt. Warren, who was to have taken part, being killed while reconnoitring it on June 18. The teams were very carefully trained behind the lines, but were not informed of the date of the raid. On the evening of July 1 they were told that they were about to undertake a final rehearsal, and were then taken in omnibuses to an old house near the firing line, where their faces and hands were blackened and they were given chewing-gum to prevent them from coughing—this being the first intimation that the actual raid was about to take place. In the meantime the wire had been cut at the point of entry and also at other places, especially opposite a new sap which was being dug by the Australians in front of the Sugar-loaf. The Germans were known to be inquisitive

<sup>40</sup> The left, centre, and right parties were organised on this occasion as follows:—

	Left.			Centre.			Right.		
Ladder men	..	2	..	2	..	..	4	4	4
Bombers	..	8	..	14	..	..	4	4	4
Bayonet men	..	7	..	11	..	..	1	1	1
Blocking men	..	6	..	4	..	..	1	1	1
Telephonists	..	2	..	4	..	..	1	1	1
Messengers	..	2	..	2	..	..	8	10	7

There were also two reserve wire cutters with the right party.

<sup>47</sup> Capt. H. T. Young, M.C.; 9th Bn. Accountant; of Brisbane, 28 Feb., 1881.

<sup>48</sup> Capt. J. P. Ramkema, M.C.; 9th Bn. Stockman; of Townsville, Q'land; b. Queensland, 12 March, 1893.

<sup>49</sup> Capt. C. E. Benson, D.C.M.; 9th Bn. Clerk; of Ryde, N.S.W., and Townsville, Q'land; b. North Ryde, 15 March, 1890. Killed in action, 2 July, 1916.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raiders' Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of July 1/2											<p>concerning the object of this digging, since their patrols had visited it. During the afternoon before the raid the German wire in front of the sap was bombed by trench-mortars, and at night, in order to deceive the enemy, a heavy bombardment was directed upon that part of the enemy's line. At 11.10 the three parties, dragging with them their ladders and mats, began to cross No-Man's Land, and at 12.45 all reported themselves in a previously-appointed position, 200 yards from the enemy. Two machine-guns in the Australian line then began to fire in order to cover the noise of a further advance. At 1.30 all parties were in a second position, 100 yards from the enemy—immediately in front of his wire—and the order was given to advance 50 yards. The right party passed through the wire at once; the centre took some time in finding an opening to get through; the left was in difficulties in</p>



the wire. At 2.3 a.m. the centre was out of touch with Neligan, but, as none of the parties had yet been discovered by the enemy, he sent to the artillery and machine-guns the word "Gallop"—upon which signal the artillery was to lay down a barrage beyond the objective, while machine-guns swept the flanks. The machine-guns responded in half-a-minute, the artillery in two minutes. At the same time the three parties rushed for the German trenches, officers and bombers leading. By 2.12 all had reported their entrance; at 2.17 Lieut.-Col. Robertson sent up the rocket-signal for their recall, and by 2.31 all parties had returned and the artillery was ordered to cease fire. So complete had been the deception that the German artillery retaliation was concentrated on the right, near the new sap, and the Australian guns were not required to lower their fire on to the raided trenches even after the operation.

During this brief inroad into the enemy's trenches, all parties had heavy fighting. While they were making the last stage of the advance Neligan found a German observation-post in front of the enemy's trench. He killed two of its three occupants, but the third threw a bomb which wounded him severely in head and shoulder. He nevertheless went on and commanded throughout.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raiders' Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of July 1/2											<p>The enemy's trenches were more than normally full, part of the enemy's garrison from farther east having been driven along the line by the feint bombardment. On the left the bombers and bayonet men of Young's party, which had gradually cut its way through the wire, drove the enemy headlong up the trench, and Pte. Mahoney<sup>50</sup> discovered and bombed the crew of the machine-gun which had so long troubled the Australians. The raiders were unable to remove the gun from its heavy stand, and accordingly brought it back, base and all. In the centre Ramkema and two men found a dugout containing 21 of the enemy. Ramkema, who was fired at repeatedly, emptied his revolver into the Germans, killing 6. He then ordered the rest to throw down their arms and come out, and with Sgt. Kenyon drove the 15 towards the Australian line. Seeing their escort to be so small, some of the</p>

prisoners showed signs of resistance, and 4 were at once shot. The remaining 11 were successfully brought in. Capt. Benson's (right) party succeeded in entering the trench before it was seen, and at once hit out hard, killing many of the enemy and capturing 4. Benson was practically the last to leave the trench, and was assisting two wounded men through the wire when he was shot and killed.

As on other occasions, the mats for crossing the enemy's wire were found useful, not during the advance, but upon the retirement, when the machine-gun was brought back over them. The knobkerries were of little use, the fighting being entirely with bombs and revolvers. There was no time for the engineers to effect anything useful. Two dead Australians and one wounded in the legs appear to have been left behind in the retirement.<sup>51</sup> After the raid, motor-lorries were waiting to take the party to the divisional baths. The men had a cup of coffee and rum, and were allowed to sleep all the next day.

A German account<sup>52</sup> says: "After strong artillery preparation an attack was made by about a company of the

<sup>50</sup> L/Cpl. D. Mahoney, M.M. (No. 2772; 9th Bn.). Farmer; of Kyogle, N.S.W.; b. Lismore, N.S.W., 1892.

<sup>51</sup> The killed included Sgt. W. H. Carroll (of South Brisbane, Q'land), one of the famous N.C.O's of the 9th.

<sup>52</sup> *History of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R.*

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raiders' Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of July 1/2											<p>enemy against Subsection II<i>d</i> (the 21st R.I.R.'s front) held by the 7th Company. Concealed by thick smoke-clouds, which at first were taken for gas-clouds, the enemy succeeded in passing by surprise the destroyed wire-entanglements, and getting over the breastwork on a broad front. Twenty-five men, including the garrison of a dugout, who had not shown enough toughness or enterprise in defending themselves, were taken prisoner. Exclusive of these the company lost 9 dead, 21 wounded, and a machine-gun captured."</p> <p>The 6th Bavarian Reserve Division records: "Through two dead and one badly wounded raiders whom we discovered in the sector, the 9 Bn., 3 Inf Bde., 1 Aust. Div. was identified. It was thus clearly shown that the 1 Aust. Div. and the 61 British Div. (previously identified) were adjoining each other."</p>



Night of July 2/3	3rd Aust. Inf. Bde. (11th Bn.)	5	62	"The Tad- pole," near Cor- donerie	50	—	—	—	—	—	<p>The raiders were under Capt. Medcalf. The preparatory bombardment completely destroyed the German trenches. Only one living German was seen (who was bayoneted), but 50 are said to have been killed by shell-fire. Although no prisoner was brought in, the enemy was identified as belonging to the same regiment as that raided by the 9th the night before (21st Bavarian R.I.R.). The raiders suffered no casualties. A German account<sup>53</sup> refers to this raid as "a renewed enemy enterprise against the 7th and 8th Companies, again very well prepared by artillery. On account of their experiences of the day before, these companies were already prepared, and inflicted on the enemy a bloody repulse, though not without loss to themselves."</p>
	2nd N.Z. Inf. Bde. (Wellington Bn.)	4	104	South of Fre- linghien	—	—	12	36	5	—	<p>In order to enclose as many Germans as possible in the trench to be raided, it was not bombarded until ten minutes before the assault. This proved a disastrous mistake. The enemy, as it turned out, had anticipated the attack, and had evacuated the trench which was to be entered, barricading it and</p>

<sup>53</sup> *History of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R.*, p. 49.

Date— 1916.	Unit.	Numbers in Raiding Party.		Place.	Raider's Estimate of Casualties Inflicted on Germans.			Casualties in Raiding Party.			Incidents of Raid.
		Officers.	Other Ranks.		Killed.	Wounded.	Captured.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	
Night of July 2/3											<p>ensconcing himself strongly behind the barricades and in the support trench, with machine-guns all ready mounted, and a large supply of bombs. As soon as the New Zealanders appeared in No-man's Land they were shot at, the fire being apparently aimed at the ditch in which they lay up. They managed to enter the enemy's trench, but found it blocked, and were heavily bombed from the support trench and from both flanks, losing a number of men. Lieut. Sheldon<sup>54</sup> wisely ordered a retirement. The New Zealanders had to withdraw through a narrow gap in the enemy's wire, and were bombed as they went through it. Three of their officers were hit.</p>

4th Aust. Inf. Bde. (14th Bn.)	6	83	Near La Houssoie (east of Bois Grenier)	50   —   — (The 50th Res. Div. lost 6 dead and 47 wounded in the bom- bardment)	10	28	—	This raid—the first undertaken by the new-arrived 4th Division—involves heavy fighting, and is described on <i>pp.</i> 300-302. The report of the 50th (Prussian) Re- serve Division states that the raiders (estimated as 50 or 60 strong) were caught by a searchlight and fired on, when in the German wire, leaving 15 dead there.
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<sup>54</sup> Lieut. H. J. D. Sheldon; 2nd Bn., Wellington Regt., Farmer; of Mount Somers, N.Z.; b. Courtney, N.Z., 1 Nov., 1890.

The operations of July 2nd and 3rd concluded the programme of raids by the I Anzac Corps. By these enterprises and those which preceded them the tension in the Armentières sector, which before the arrival of that corps had been slight, had been raised to a degree not indeed equal to that of a protracted battle, but nevertheless high enough to be keenly felt by the troops. The losses afford an indication of this, although an inadequate one. Whereas in the last week of April the casualties of the I Anzac Corps had been only 118 as against an average of 563 for each of the four other corps of the Second Army, those for the week ending July 2nd were—I Anzac, 773; average in the other corps, 533.<sup>55</sup> The loss on the side of the Germans, in spite of their careful economy of life, was probably much greater, and undoubtedly the heavier strain was upon their troops, since the attacking side knew where and when each blow was to fall, whereas the defenders were in ignorance. The diary of a New Zealand battalion for July 1st states: "Apparently the enemy is nervous, for little is needed to start the alarm, and he is using many flares." The same effects were observed elsewhere, and Birdwood published an order congratulating the divisions which had planned the raids and stating that the troops had established their ascendancy over the enemy. This judgment was somewhat optimistic, since all the evidence goes to show that the German morale was at that time exceedingly high. On the very next night the enemy hit back by raiding the Anzac troops in two places, and, as will shortly be narrated, the New Zealand Division, undertaking a week later a further series of raids, against which the enemy seems to have been prepared, encountered, in spite of all its bravery, a succession of sharp repulses. The fighting had not been of such a nature as to engender in most of the troops engaged on either side even a passing dread of returning to the front line, or to prevent their full enjoyment of the intervals in the back area. But although even the strain imposed on the Germans could be easily remedied by a little rest, the result was of considerable value to the Anzac troops, who undoubtedly gained a self-confidence which thereafter was seldom shaken. A further

<sup>55</sup> That the tension was maintained by artillery and other activity is proved by the losses of the Anzac troops—880—in the succeeding week, in which there occurred only four raids, two by Anzac troops, and two by the Germans.



result must have been to keep the staffs of the German front-line formations in that sector fully occupied, and the local commanders were probably forced to relieve some battered units a few days sooner than they would otherwise have done.

One part of Haig's object in directing these measures against the enemy—"to wear him out and reduce his fighting efficiency"—was therefore probably to some extent attained. But such effects would not be felt farther back than the reserve battalions of the regiments holding the line. Precisely how the Allied commanders expected these raids to achieve their primary object—that of "deceiving the enemy as to the real front of attack"—and whether it was in any degree actually achieved, is more difficult to determine. A series of mere raids, especially one which began only after the bombardment on the Somme had already opened, would not be likely to mislead the enemy concerning the point of attack. Such sham preparations as the constructing of dummy trenches and gun emplacements, the bombarding of billets and cutting of wire by the artillery, might indeed have created a deception. This form of ruse appears to have been discussed by Haig with his army commanders at conferences in February, April, and May, and orders had been given for such action. On the right flank of I Anzac General Haking, in preparation for his proposed attack on the Sugar-loaf,<sup>56</sup> had in May ordered the digging in No-Man's Land of a sap cutting off part of the re-entrant in the British line,<sup>57</sup> and the 1st Australian Pioneers had been digging saps in No-Man's Land to connect with it. The nightly digging of these works appears to have caused more anxiety to the staff of the German division holding that part of the line than did the whole series of raids launched by the I Anzac Corps.<sup>58</sup> Had preparations similar to those preceding an offensive been undertaken in accordance with a definite plan laid down by G.H.Q., and on a great scale, beginning as early as February and continuing until after the opening of the Somme battle,

<sup>56</sup> See pp. 258-9.

<sup>57</sup> This sap was dug by the 10th (Rhondda) Battalion of the Welch Regiment—of the 38th (Welch) Division—on the night of May 27, the officer superintending the work, Major M. A. Napier (of Bath, Eng.), being killed and one man wounded. The work was thenceforth known as the "Rhondda Sap."

<sup>58</sup> See pp. 275-6.

the enemy might have been as much deceived as were the British and French by the Germans in 1918. Labour, however, was all too scarce; the special labour battalions, which, recruited from older or less active men, were at this stage pouring into France, were insufficient even for the provision of the necessary roads and railways, and the fighting troops, as General Plumer pointed out on May 23rd, had "more than they can do to make good their front and support lines and recover abandoned trenches." In any case, at the end of May, when the army commanders were finally ordered to adopt such measures of this nature as seemed to them wise, the Germans had long since detected the British concentration on the Somme.

This whole matter is one of importance, since with it is bound up the larger problem of how far surprise could have been achieved on the Western Front; and, by the judgment formed upon this question, Haig's leadership will partly be judged. As will be explained when that subject is discussed,<sup>59</sup> Haig did not then believe that surprise was attainable in a great offensive, except in the comparatively minor details. Moreover, the raids can hardly have been seriously intended to cloak from the enemy the Allies' purpose of attacking on the Somme, since the bombardment preceding that "long-expected" thrust<sup>60</sup> had already begun. If, therefore, they were expected to affect the enemy otherwise than by wearing him down, it must have been hoped that they would pin down his forces and reserves on their present fronts, away from the Somme, and so prevent their being withdrawn to meet the general offensive. But obviously the German staff, if desirous to move its troops, would not be deterred merely by raids or the fear of their continuance. Only the apprehension of an important attack somewhere else than on the Somme would have that effect, and it may be doubted whether these small enterprises caused the enemy's higher staff any such anxiety or really pinned down on the front troops who

<sup>59</sup> See end of Chapter xxv.

<sup>60</sup> Falkenhayn says: "On the following day (June 24) the long-expected and hoped-for enemy offensive was begun . . . on both sides of the Somme. . . . The requests of the Commander of the 2nd Army for reinforcements, made in the last weeks during which the attack was expected, had been met as fully as possible." (*General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, p. 262.) The German divisions opposite the British front were increased to five, and seventeen "light field howitzer" batteries were added.

would otherwise have been moved. The historian of the Bavarian forces notes<sup>61</sup> that since the middle of June the sector "had been constantly becoming livelier," but the inference to be drawn from his account is that no apprehension of serious attack was engendered in the enemy. There is ample evidence that the German staff, like any other reasonable men in such circumstances, accepted these operations for what they were—an attempt to distract the attention or divert the force of the Germans from the offensive then known to be imminent upon the Somme. In other words, these minor "demonstrations," while useful exercise for the troops and not costly in lives, do not appear in any way to have misled the enemy. If they were designed to cloak the Somme offensive, the cloak was a transparent one.

While these events were occurring, the two new divisions constituting the infantry of the II Anzac Corps, which had been training in Egypt and holding the defences east of the Suez Canal, were moved to France. Their training, which in some respects had made extraordinary demands upon men and officers, requires special description.

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<sup>61</sup> *Die Bayern im Grossen Kriege, 1914-1918*, p. 289 (footnote).

## CHAPTER X

### THE ARRIVAL OF II ANZAC

THEIR first test had come immediately after the divisions of the I Anzac Corps had left the Canal, in the defence of which they were to be replaced by those of the II Corps, still untried and very crude, the 4th going to Serapeum and the 5th to Ferry Post. As the rolling-stock of the Egyptian railways was fully employed in carrying the other divisions, G.H.Q. decided that these two should move from Tel el Kebir by march-route across the intervening desert. Both the railway and the Sweet-water Canal traversed this desert, and the available routes across the sand lay, in parts, beside them. These portions, however, were little—if at all—better than open desert, and it was left to brigade commanders to select whatever line of advance they preferred. In each division the “old” brigade<sup>1</sup> was to take over the line first, and, as time was pressing, the whole of the 8th Brigade and a battalion of the 4th<sup>2</sup> were sent ahead by train. The rest of the 4th and the new brigades were to follow on foot.

It was recognised that for new troops this would be a severe trial. M'Cay, who on March 22nd had arrived from Australia and taken over command of the 5th Division, had doubts as to its feasibility, and raised some objection, but was referred to G.H.Q., where he was informed that, trains not being available, the order must be carried out. Careful preparation was therefore obviously called for. Glasfurd in his order to the 12th Brigade, said:

The 12th Brigade within a month of its formation has been called upon to make a three-days march under service conditions. The first stage is 15 miles, the second also 15 miles, and the third 9 miles—over heavy sand; water and transport are limited. For young troops unaccustomed to marching this will be a severe test; the difficulties can, however, be foreseen; and they can be overcome by preparation and by strict attention to march discipline and to all orders issued.

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<sup>1</sup> That is, the 4th and 8th Brigades respectively, which had existed before the re-organisation.

<sup>2</sup> The 16th Battalion.



Being a trained British officer, he naturally insisted upon much attention being paid, before starting, to the feet of the men; but neither Australian officers nor their men had at this time really learnt the necessity for such care, and there was in both a feeling strongly adverse to any "mothering." Cox, who with his (mainly British) staff had now assumed command of the 4th Division, was slightly more lenient in his march orders than M'Cay, whose staff (largely composed of Australians)<sup>3</sup> had taken over the 5th. The test being under service conditions, the troops had to march with full packs and waterbottles, and (in the case of the infantry) with 120 rounds of ammunition, but, whereas Cox allowed his brigades to pack their rations for the day of march and their water-proof sheets upon the camels which accompanied them, according to M'Cay's orders both were to be carried by the men.

To face the approaching hot weather the troops had been provided with British sun-helmets and cotton uniforms; and, as it was already becoming warm, Monash, whose brigade was to lead, arranged to start at day-break. It was found,

<sup>3</sup> The two senior officers of the general staff of the 5th Division were, however, British. The staffs of the 4th and 5th Divisions were:

#### 4TH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION.

Major-General Sir H. V. Cox, commanding.

Lieutenant D. G. Reyburn, Indian Army, and Lieutenant C. H. V. Cox, Leicestershire Regiment (*Aides-de-Camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. Duncan, The Royal Scots Fusiliers, Major E. M. Williams, **A.I.F.**, Captain R. A. F. Spence, Royal Highlanders (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel E. Armstrong, Highland Light Infantry, Major J. G. Ramsay, Cameron Highlanders, Captain W. Fowler-Brownsworth, **A.I.F.** (*Administrative Staff*); Brigadier-General C. Rosenthal, **A.I.F.** (*Artillery*); Lieutenant-Colonel G. C. E. Elliott, R.E. (*Engineers*); Major J. E. Fraser, **A.I.F.** (*Signals*); Lieutenant-Colonel A. A. Holdsworth, **A.I.F.** (*Supply & Transport*); Lieutenant-Colonel G. W. Barber, **A.I.F.**, and Major A. H. Marks, **A.I.F.** (*Medical*); Major W. A. Kendall, **A.I.F.** (*Veterinary*); Lieutenant J. Tuckett, **A.I.F.** (*Ordnance*); Captain F. K. Prideaux-Brune, **A.I.F.** (*Police*).

#### 5TH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION.

Major-General the Hon. J. W. M'Cay, commanding.

Lieutenant W. L. Hamilton, **A.I.F.**, and Lieutenant H. F. Moore, **A.I.F.** (*Aides-de-camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Wagstaff, R.E., Major D. M. King, Liverpool Regiment, Captain A. J. Boase, **A.I.F.** (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. P. McGlinn, **A.I.F.**, Captain R. P. Varwell, Royal Irish Rifles, Captain G. D. Smith, **A.I.F.** (*Administrative Staff*); Brigadier-General S. E. Christian, **A.I.F.** (*Artillery*); Lieutenant-Colonel A. B. Carey, R.E. (*Engineers*); Major R. A. Stanley, **A.I.F.** (*Signals*); Lieutenant-Colonel F. H. Francis, **A.I.F.** (*Supply & Transport*); Lieutenant-Colonel C. W. H. Hardy, **A.I.F.**, and Major H. H. B. Fcllitt, **A.I.F.** (*Medical*); Major M. Henry, **A.I.F.** (*Veterinary*); Captain J. M. Rodd, A.O.D. (*Ordnance*); Major E. J. F. Langley, **A.I.F.** (*Police*).

however, that the troops could not load the camels before daylight, and this circumstance henceforth governed the starting hour. The march as far as Moascar comprised two stages, the columns bivouacking for one night, generally at the oasis of Mahsama, where the staff had arranged for a dépôt of water and food. Beyond Moascar was the final stage, which, in the case of the 5th Division, lay along the made road to Ferry Post, but in that of the 4th across desert to Serapeum. The desert marches were found to be even more trying than had been anticipated. Few of the men could resist emptying their waterbottles early in the day. Their cotton trousers chafed, as did the new boots, especially when fine sand worked into them. The whole force was just recovering from the passing sickness caused by anti-typhoid inoculation a few days before. During the second stage of the 4th Brigade's progress, men, after toiling for a while through very heavy sand, began to "fall out" in alarming numbers. The New Zealanders from Moascar camp, however, went out to their assistance, and before dark, out of 132 who fell out, 118 had reached camp, a few others straggling in during the night.

The 4th Brigade was followed by the 14th (under General Irving), which left Tel el Kebir at 6 a.m. on March 27th; it was followed the same afternoon by the 12th (under Glasfurd), which marched half-a-day behind it. In the 14th, which advanced on a wide front in four successive lines—infantry in front, transport in rear—numbers of men fell out almost from the start, but both brigades reached their respective places of bivouac in good time. The next day was hotter, with no breeze. In the 4th Brigade, which was then making the final stage from Moascar to Serapeum through a cloud of dust and flies, all went fairly well until the column came within sight of the tents of Serapeum, when it dissolved into trailing groups and straggled into camp. It was revived by a bath in the Canal. In the 12th Brigade Glasfurd halted his men during all the hours of heat from 8.50 to 3.25; 165 men fell out, but the brigade reached bivouac in good formation. The 14th Brigade had to traverse the most difficult stretch between Mahsama and Moascar. About 11 a.m., when the midday halt was called, some of the men began to wander in

search of the undrinkable water which was all that lay within reach, and, possibly for this reason, General Irving shortly after midday recommenced the march. At this point there lay ahead some difficult sandhills, and, to avoid them, Irving made a *détour* towards a desert ridge which, as the divisional staff had informed him, would afford a firmer surface. After an hour's advance in the intense heat of midday the brigade began to reach this ridge in a state of utter exhaustion. According to Irving's report—

Scores, including Officers and N.C.O's, literally dropped down, the officers and N.C.O's from the extra fatigue they had experienced in looking after and exhorting their men.

A halt was called, and the medical officers advised that the men should be allowed "to go on at their own gait while they were able." The brigade, now practically out of hand and without any attempt at formation, straggled into camp during the evening, the New Zealanders again going out to succour the most distressed. On the following day the Prince of Wales reviewed the brigade as it passed along the road to Ferry Post, when, according to one account, there occurred in some units a demonstration of feeling against their brigadier.

The later columns, making the same marches with special precautions and in less severe weather, came through with little trouble,<sup>4</sup> and, if staff and troops had been more experienced, greater success might have been achieved even by leaders as careful as Monash and Glasfurd. Many of the men felt bitterly that they and their units had been unnecessarily humiliated by subjection to so severe a trial. Irving, whose arrangements for the march were in M'Cay's opinion very defective, was replaced in the command of the 14th Brigade by Colonel Pope of the 16th Battalion.

Upon the arrival of the new divisions at the Canal, an additional and most unpleasant surprise awaited them. At Serapeum and Moascar respectively there were found in camp the men whom the older divisions had ejected as unsuitable to accompany their units to France and who had been left

<sup>4</sup> A rumour was afterwards current that, as a result of this march, several men had died. Though the available records contain no evidence to support this statement, it is not therefore necessarily incorrect.

behind "for further training"<sup>5</sup>—1,354 from the 1st Division, and 851 from the 2nd. Birdwood and White, who were then on the point of leaving Egypt, and who had not been informed of the "weeding out," assumed that these men were merely surplus reinforcements, and, to avoid unnecessary railway travelling, the new divisions (which, mainly through the loss of their artillery, were now 6,410 under strength) were ordered to absorb them.<sup>6</sup> A day or two later, when the true nature of these quotas began to be apparent, Birdwood stood by his order, directing that their future must depend upon their conduct.

The new divisions thus absorbed the whole of the "rejects" of the older ones, the men being allotted according to their States. Of the New South Welshmen, no less than 200 were taken by one battalion—the 13th, which fortunately was an old Gallipoli unit. The rejects brought with them no "conduct sheets," and, in physique and training, were "far below the original 13th." The subsequent return of a number of the old 13th men from hospital gave an opportunity of getting rid of a proportion of the undesirables, some of whom are said to have been, during their stay in Egypt, allotted to, and rejected in turn by, no less than eight units.<sup>7</sup> Of the rest, though much trouble was expected of them, the published history of the 13th states:<sup>8</sup>

Those we kept permanently—about 120—generally made good and, later on, on the bloody, muddy fields of France and Belgium, did work equal to that of any troops in the world, and died as gamely. Perhaps it was the fact that no conduct sheets arrived with them. . . . They perhaps troubled their officers, but they troubled the enemy more.

Such was the interesting result of Murray's exhortation to the Australian commanders concerning discipline, and of their efforts to improve it. Later, some of the commanders in the 4th Division, finding themselves hampered by an undue percentage of unintelligent or otherwise troublesome soldiers,

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 57-8.

<sup>6</sup> The main shortage was in the infantry battalions, which had had to furnish men to replace the withdrawn artillery.

<sup>7</sup> According to the published history of the battalion (*The Thirteenth*, by Captain T. A. White, p. 61), four years after the war some of these men "were seen wearing the honourable badges of returned soldiers . . . and rattling collection boxes as suffering warriors."

<sup>8</sup> *The Thirteenth*, p. 61.



endeavoured to obtain permission from Godley to send them back to the training battalions. Godley, however, held that this would merely relieve regimental officers of part of their duty—that of training unpromising material—and refused the request.

It was now approaching summer, and the training of the two divisions in the desert east of the Canal was greatly hampered by the heat. Cool mess-huts were, however, erected. Except for a short time before May 12th, when an enemy offensive was expected but did not eventuate,<sup>9</sup> the forward line was no longer heavily garrisoned, as it had been by the old divisions, but was held only by sentries and machine-gunners: a single battalion<sup>10</sup> from each division provided most of the actual garrison and of the immediate support,<sup>11</sup> the other battalions being free for training, which was carried out in the comparative cool of mornings and evenings.<sup>12</sup> To parts of the front the water had still to be transported by camels, and there had still to be carried out upon the desert trench-lines a certain amount of work, partly necessitated by the fact that some of the wire-entanglements, so laboriously constructed by the older divisions, had now turned into sand-hills, which completely blocked the view of the men in part of the firing line. To obviate this drawback, a number of new trenches of simple design were hurriedly dug. During these months, however, the active defence in all three sectors of the Canal fell mainly upon the mounted troops. Murray's plan for occupying the Katia district (on the northern route) was now nearing achievement, and he proposed to safeguard

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<sup>9</sup> This expectation of an offensive followed the Turkish raid upon the British at Katia in April (*see p. 294*).

<sup>10</sup> Or two half-battalions.

<sup>11</sup> A light horse squadron (or two half-squadrons) was also stationed at the front line, with the remainder of its regiment in immediate reserve.

<sup>12</sup> The distributions made by the Australian Comforts Fund were of great value to the troops during this period. Health was good, although at the staging camps flies abounded. In the earlier months large dumps of animal manure had provided a breeding ground, but the fly menace was countered with far greater vigour than at Gallipoli. Steps were taken to destroy unnecessary manure-heaps, and to burn the manure, which was gathered into a few central dumps; what could not be burnt (owing to the admixture of sand) was spread out and raked over daily. In spite of all this, flies remained abundant. Only box-latrines were now used, and this possibly prevented the flies from being dangerously contaminated. At any rate the precautions seem to have had a valuable effect, since intestinal disease was not greatly prevalent and seems to have actually declined as the summer advanced. For example, in the 5th Division, during the six weeks after April 22, the percentage of troops suffering from diarrhoea fell gradually from 3 to 1.3.

the central and southern sectors in a somewhat similar fashion—by throwing out posts far up the desert valleys by which the enemy must approach. An entirely successful raid by the light horse, who killed or captured the garrison of the nearest enemy post, at Jifjafa, may have augured some success for this method. At the end of April, however, a sharp reverse inflicted by the enemy upon the advanced yeomanry at Katia caused the commander-in-chief to abandon this part of his plan; but he continued—with British infantry and troops of the Anzac Mounted Division—to push forward into the Katia district, at the same time carrying out to the letter the instructions originally given to him, by constantly raiding the enemy's advanced dépôts in Sinai, destroying his wells, and emptying his cisterns.<sup>13</sup> It was the brilliant and continued success of the light horse and mounted rifles in carrying out one difficult task after another in exact accordance with his policy and orders, that occasioned a marked change in the nature of Murray's written references to his Australian troops. Telegraphing to Robertson on May 10th, he urged that the Anzac Mounted Division should be left with him as being "the only really reliable mounted troops I have." On May 16th (after their raid on Mageibra):

I feel sure that no troops but Australians and New Zealanders could have carried out this operation in the prevailing weather.

May 30 (writing to General Lawrence after the Bir Salmana raid): Any work entrusted to these excellent troops is invariably well executed.

June 16 (after the emptying of the Muksheib cisterns): This operation could not have been better carried out. . . . (The Commander-in-Chief) is particularly struck with the splendid way the men worked. Their discipline and endurance stood the test extremely well.

June 28 (after the salving of an aeroplane in the desert). Sir Archibald is anxious that these troops should know how great is his admiration for their continuous good service.

Of the new Australian infantry divisions, however, on May 7th he telegraphed to Robertson:

The artillery is not coming on as fast as General Godley had anticipated, and I do not think it will be ready for service in France until the end of June. . . .

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<sup>13</sup> At this stage the disaster of General Townshend's surrender in Mesopotamia was known to be impending, and Robertson at the War Office was urging that any success which could be achieved in the Egyptian theatre as an offset would be very valuable.

It appears as if scarcely any of the commanders in Egypt recognised the full meaning of the task imposed upon the staff and troops of the new divisions when their artillery was taken from them in order to hasten the departure of the 1st and 2nd. In the middle of March, when almost all the other units of the divisions had been formed, the artillery staffs had actually to recommence the task of raising anew for themselves practically the whole of their personnel. A scanty nucleus—about 150 officers and men from the artillery of the older divisions—had been allotted to each;<sup>14</sup> but, except for these, the whole highly-specialised service had to be recruited forthwith from volunteers, chiefly from the infantry and light horse. As a start, about March 15th each infantry battalion in the two divisions was ordered to supply 100 men, and these were supplemented a fortnight later by, roughly speaking, an equal number from the light horse. The process of welding this raw material into trained artillery may be illustrated by the case of the 12th Field Artillery Brigade of the 4th Division.

As a trained nucleus for this brigade, its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Rabett (himself a young officer, formerly of the militia artillery in Australia), received, in all, five subalterns and about thirty artillerymen. Of the five officers, three had served at Anzac, and two were reinforcement officers who had originally been N.C.O's in the militia artillery in Australia. One of the officers (with Anzac experience) Rabett appointed as his brigade adjutant; the other four became his battery commanders. In order to select the seventeen additional officers required, Rabett visited Cairo and picked from the reserve camps of the light horse<sup>15</sup> a

<sup>14</sup> Others appear to have been attached later. On May 28 the composition of the 5th Divisional Artillery was—

Artillery personnel	..	..	..	..	457
Light horse	..	..	..	..	1,198
Infantry	..	..	..	..	1,171
Other arms	..	..	..	..	151
Total	..	..	..	..	2,977

<sup>15</sup> The infantry had already been thoroughly "combed" to supply officers for their own battalions. Consequently in the 4th Divisional Artillery, 33 out of 47 N.C.O's to whom commissions were given were light horsemen, and 12 artillerymen.

number of youngsters from the great Australian public schools. Having made his selection, he called them together, asked whether each was prepared to work himself to the bone in order to complete the task ahead, and then obtained their transfer to Tel el Kebir.

As it was not known how soon this artillery might be required to defend the Canal, no fixed period for training could be promised. Rabett assumed that they would have eight weeks, drew up a careful syllabus for each day and hour of training, and impressed on his four battery commanders that, whatever happened, this syllabus must be rigidly adhered to. Daily training then commenced, the men beginning under their battery commanders at 6.30 a.m. and working for ten hours (not counting intervals). In order to keep the new officers ahead of their men, Rabett took them as a class at 4.30 every morning, lecturing them for two hours before the troops came on parade, when they put in an hour's drill with their men. Fortunately certain parts of the instruction could be given by officers or N.C.O's without special knowledge of artillery work; but within a fortnight the new officers, putting in eight hours with the troops and four by themselves, were able to take their men in special subjects also.

It had been intended to use light horsemen as drivers and infantrymen as gunners, but as it was found that many of the light horse reinforcements could not ride, this distinction was not maintained. Although horses and guns were scarce, Tel el Kebir was an excellent manœuvre-area, and the artillery commanders were hoping that their brigades would be left there, but in the first fortnight in April they were sent to the Canal, where the heavy sand made manœuvre-drill impossible. In the 12th Brigade the men were given some practice by driving a watercart.

The artillery of both divisions were now given the elementary shooting-practice which was to end their training in Egypt. That of the 5th had had among its officers twelve regulars (of the Royal Australian Artillery, or from Duntroon); the brigades of the 4th Divisional Artillery had not one. It had fallen upon a handful of Australian militia



officers to create in two months this specialised force. It is unlikely that such a task was ever attempted among any other troops destined for the Western Front.

The War Office was naturally anxious to reinforce the army in France, and, loyal to his principles, Murray on May 3rd telegraphed:

Do not be afraid to take my 11th, 42nd, and two Australian divisions from me. I may not do wonders with the balance, but I shall not be inactive.

Birdwood's opinion had always been that the infantry of the 4th and 5th Divisions, containing, as it did, half the old Gallipoli men, was as fit to come to France as that of the 1st and 2nd. Accordingly Robertson now telegraphed to Murray asking whether this estimate was correct. The reply was:

It is hardly correct. . . I know this is a theory of Birdwood's, but as a matter of fact I judged from personal inspection and observation that the infantry of the 4th and 5th Divisions is decidedly inferior, both as regards physique, training, and officers, to that of the first two divisions. . . .

He expressed a hope that it would be ready for France by the end of May; but the artillery could hardly be so for an additional month, unless it was to complete in France the groundwork of its training. Finally, at the end of May, the two divisions were ordered to the Western Front. Murray, who had frequently inspected them, and was undoubtedly pleased with their progress, then wrote to Robertson:

I think it is desirable to give you some idea of the degree of efficiency which these divisions will be found to have attained. . . . As regards the artillery, which is the most backward arm, further training is undoubtedly required to enable the batteries to take their place in the line with a reasonable standard of efficiency. . . . Nevertheless, taking into consideration that their artillery has been formed scarcely two months, and that only 7 per cent. of the personnel were originally artillerymen,<sup>16</sup> with about 46 per cent. of infantry and 47 per cent. of light horsemen added, I consider that their general progress is up to my expectations. . . . All batteries have completed their gun practice (150 rounds per 18-pounder battery, and 120 rounds per howitzer battery) before they embark.

<sup>16</sup> This figure is possibly too low. For the 4th Division the proportion of artillerymen was given by General Rosenthal as 15 per cent. Murray's letter states that in this new artillery "the infantry personnel had been found considerably more tractable and responsive to training than the light horsemen." Artillery officers in general, however, seem to have observed little difference in this respect between recruits from these two sources.

Concerning the infantry, the material is unquestionably very good, in so far as concerns the rank and file. Officers are, however, on the whole, poor in military knowledge, and herein lies the chief trouble both as regards infantry and artillery. With good regular officers, who know how to train and command them, the infantry would be soon turned into a magnificent fighting force. The men are keen and energetic; they have completed their firing, and they are generally much better than I had expected in view of the amount of training they have received.

He added, however, that their training was still incomplete; and that their marching, march discipline, and the fit of their equipment "left much to be desired."

The opinion of the corps commander, Godley, on the other hand, was that the 4th and 5th were "just as good, if not better in physique than the 1st and 2nd, and unquestionably better trained."<sup>17</sup>

Of their commanders, Murray wrote:

I consider Major-General Sir H. V. Cox . . . and Major-General M'Cay quite suitable for the command of divisions in France. They are both men of character, determination, and hard fighters.

At this stage the light horse (with the exception of the 13th Regiment and part of the 4th, which accompanied the infantry to France as divisional cavalry) finally parted from their infantry. Although at first they possessed some hope of following the other divisions, and though Birdwood afterwards more than once asked to have a portion of them sent to him as infantry reinforcements, there was never any real chance of their being brought to France as mounted troops and they were better retained as the magnificent cavalry that they were. Distinguished as was the record of the Australian infantry in France, it never surpassed—if indeed it equalled—that of the mounted troops whom they were now leaving. The tall bronzed horsemen, who watched the tents of their fellow-countrymen on the Canal gradually disappear, had before them a very different campaign. Working, in the old Anzac undress, through the sand and torrid heat of Sinai and the dust and fever of Palestine, little heard of either by mates in France or by people at home, the Anzac Mounted

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<sup>17</sup> Godley considered that they had had more time for training, especially in such departments as bombing and bayonet fighting.

Division<sup>18</sup> was nevertheless destined, as its historian has justly claimed,<sup>19</sup> "to achieve results unequalled by any other division of horse, Allied or enemy, engaged on any front in the war."

The 4th Australian Infantry Division began to reach France early in June,<sup>20</sup> and, like its predecessors, came by rail (as one man said, "through 200 miles of garden" in the Rhone Valley) to the area about Merris. Birdwood suggested that it should be incorporated in his army corps, thus allowing the New Zealand Division to be transferred to II Anzac, whose commander, Godley, held the administrative command of the New Zealand force. The suggestion was shortly afterwards approved, but for the time being the New Zealanders remained in Birdwood's corps, and the 4th Division was merely attached to it. About the time when the 4th arrived, the I Anzac Corps was warned (as will presently be related) that it would be required to move to another part of the front. As the proportion of veterans in the infantry of the new divisions was the same as in the old, Birdwood decided to put the 4th immediately into the line, ostensibly for practice, but really in order to relieve troops who were required for the move. On June 15th he therefore ordered that the 4th Brigade should be given a tour of duty as soon as possible in place of a brigade of the 2nd Division; the remaining infantry of the 4th Division was also to enter the trenches as soon as that step could be arranged. The 4th Divisional Artillery was to be "practised" by being at first attached to that of the 2nd Division. As a first measure, on June 21st and 22nd each battery of the 4th was to send forward its commander with one of his officers and twenty-five others, to be attached to a battery of the 2nd Division in the line.

<sup>18</sup> The original staff was:

Major-General H. G. Chauvel, commanding.

Lieutenants J. R. C. Davies, **A.I.F.**, and G. W. W. White, **A.I.F.** (*Aides-de-camp*); Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Browne, 14th Hussars, Major W. J. Foster, **A.I.F.**, and Captain W. J. Urquhart, **A.I.F.** (*General Staff*); Lieutenant-Colonel C. G. Powles, N.Z. Staff Corps, Major W. P. Farr, **A.I.F.**, and Captain N. B. Loveridge, **A.I.F.** (*Administrative Staff*); Captain J. H. Alexander, R.E. (*Engineers*); Major J. P. L. McCall, **A.I.F.** (*Signals*); Major W. Stansfield, **A.I.F.** (*Supply & Transport*); Lieutenant-Colonel R. M. Downes, **A.I.F.**, and Major C. E. Hercus, N.Z.E.F. (*Medical*); Major J. Kendall, **A.I.F.** (*Veterinary*); Captain V. T. Whelan, A.O.D. (*Ordnance*), Major J. H. Bisdee, V.C., **A.I.F.** (*Police*).

<sup>19</sup> *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18, Volume VII (Sinai and Palestine)*, by H. S. Gullett, p. 58.

<sup>20</sup> On the Suez Canal the No. 2 Section, previously held by the Anzac Corps with two divisions, had been handed over to one division, the 53rd.

The rest of the 4th Divisional Artillery was to be similarly absorbed during the following days. That of the 2nd would then be withdrawn, so that by July 4th the artillery of the 4th would be holding the sector unaided. This plan was duly carried out; and thus guns' crews consisting almost entirely of men who on March 14th had been privates in the infantry and light horse—with section commanders of whom a large proportion had in March been infantry or light horse sergeants—became on July 4th responsible for the artillery defence of a sector of the Western Front.

The infantry both of the 4th and, subsequently, of the 5th Divisions were to experience active fighting almost from the moment of their entry into the line. That of the 4th had not yet reached the front area when General Cox learned that his troops would be expected to undertake one of the series of raids designed to engage the enemy's attention at the time of the Somme offensive. Upon receiving this intelligence Cox suggested that "for a first attempt the raid should *not* be on too ambitious a scale," that it should be undertaken on the latest practicable date, and that the team should be sent into the trenches in advance of its brigade. General Monash's "veteran" 4th Brigade was naturally selected for the operation, and was on June 18th temporarily transferred to the 2nd Division; and on June 22nd several platoons from the 13th and 14th Battalions were introduced into the line of the 5th Brigade, the number being gradually increased, although the formal relief by the 4th Brigade did not commence until June 27th. Monash ordered the 14th Battalion to furnish the raiding team, which forthwith began its training under the leadership of Lieutenant Harold Boyd Wanliss,<sup>21</sup> a young officer of that battalion who, though never before in action, was recognised by all who knew him as likely to become, both by mental and moral qualities, one of the outstanding leaders in the brigade. As the enterprise was to occur on the night of July 2nd, when the 4th Brigade staff would have been only two days in control of the Bois Grenier sector, many of the preparations, which were necessarily in some respects hurried, were made by the staff of the 2nd Division. About

<sup>21</sup> Capt. H. B. Wanliss, D.S.O.; 14th Bn. Orchardist and farmer; of Ballarat and Lorne, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 11 Dec., 1891. Killed in action, 26 Sept., 1917.



3,700 rounds were fired in the artillery preparation and subsequent bombardment. The point chosen was about 600 yards west of the scene of the first enterprise undertaken by the Australians under Foss.<sup>22</sup> The raiders, 6 officers and 83 men, successfully crossed No-Man's Land, although their scouts had observed on their right front an enemy wiring party, which could be heard laughing and talking as the raiders first advanced. The first trench-mortar bombs fell directly among these Germans, and ten of their bodies were afterwards counted. When, however, the raiders reached the enemy wire they found it almost entirely uncut, the bombs having exploded mainly in an open space between two portions of the entanglement, of which there were four solid belts and some trip wire. The enemy appears to have expected the attack and to have directed not only his machine-guns, but also his shrapnel, upon the front of his own trenches. The men struggling in the wire began to fall, and others found themselves scrambling forward over the bodies of the wounded. Lieutenant Harvey,<sup>23</sup> in the lead, shouting "Come on, Australia!", was hit while hacking through the wire. Lieutenants Julian<sup>24</sup> and Roderick,<sup>25</sup> the leaders of the trench-parties, were both shot, the former mortally. Wanliss received a machine-gun bullet in the mouth, but held on and reached the enemy's parapet with some twenty-five men. Only nine minutes in the trench had been allowed for, and the artillery was then to shorten its range again on to the German parapet. There was therefore need for extreme haste. "We rushed in, 'uppercut' everyone about, and then came back," was Wanliss's subsequent description. Only their thorough training saved the raiders from complete disaster. From first to last some of the enemy, sheltered behind the parapets, were throwing bombs. Nevertheless Sergeants Pearce<sup>26</sup> and Garcia<sup>27</sup> carried on in place of their leaders, duly searched part of the trenches,

<sup>22</sup> See p. 244.

<sup>23</sup> Lieut. A. T. Harvey, 14th Bn. Clerk; of Bundaberg, Q'land, and Melbourne; b. Maryborough, Q'land, 20 March, 1888.

<sup>24</sup> Lieut. R. D. Julian, 14th Bn. Ironmonger; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Minyip, Vic., 7th Oct., 1894. Killed in action, 2 July, 1916.

<sup>25</sup> Lieut. J. B. Roderick, 14th Bn. Electrical engineering student; of Camberwell, Vic.; b. Albert Park, Vic., 11 Sept., 1896.

<sup>26</sup> Sgt. A. T. Pearce (served as No. 1441, John Pearce; 14th Bn.). Labourer; of Trawalla, Vic.; b. Burrumbeet, Vic., 1893. Killed in action, 11 Aug., 1916.

<sup>27</sup> Lieut. R. J. Garcia, D.C.M., M.M.; 14th Bn. Farrier; of Footscray, Vic.; b. Hobart, Tas., 12 July, 1880.

and bombed four dugouts containing Germans. Wanliss, who though badly wounded was on the parapet directing, then gave the signal to return. In recrossing the wire, on which the Germans were still firing with machine-guns from both flanks, many more of the party were hit; others struggled free with the greatest difficulty, partly, as before, over the bodies of their dead or wounded comrades. Wanliss himself found one of his sergeants, named Croft,<sup>28</sup> wounded in the wire and endeavoured to carry him back, but, being faint with his wound, could not extricate him. The enemy now saw the returning party and concentrated his fire upon it. Fortunately a small canalised stream, the Courau, ran through No-Man's Land, and although the Germans kept up their rifle- and shrapnel-fire for an hour, the raiders clung to this shelter, the survivors eventually reaching their lines through a ditch which approached the Australian parapet. Wanliss, who had been hit again by shrapnel, had fainted in the mud, but Sergeants Anderson,<sup>29</sup> Harris,<sup>30</sup> and De Arango<sup>31</sup> carried him and fourteen others into safety. All the officers and nearly the whole of the actual assaulting party had been hit. Nine failed to return—all left dead or wounded in the enemy's trenches or in his wire.<sup>32</sup> Although it was claimed, on slight evidence, that fifty Germans were killed during this raid, it is probable that the number was much exaggerated,<sup>33</sup> and that, like most other hurriedly organised attacks with inexperienced troops, this operation, in spite of much gallantry, did more harm to the raiders than to the enemy.

As has been already observed,<sup>34</sup> the enemy struck back on the following night, raiding the Anzac line in two places. One of these enterprises was launched against the very

<sup>28</sup> Sgt. H. Croft (No. 46; 14th Bn.). Shearer and sleeper-cutter; of Elmhurst, Vic.; b. Elmhurst, 1889. Died of wounds while prisoner of war, 8 July, 1916.

<sup>29</sup> Capt. F. Anderson, M.M.; 14th Bn. Foreman, Victorian Forests Department; of Ararat, Vic.; b. Buangor, Vic., 15 July, 1893.

<sup>30</sup> Capt. N. C. Harris; 14th Bn. Farmer; of Bannockburn, Vic.; b. Birkenhead, Cheshire, Eng., 27 Feb., 1895.

<sup>31</sup> Sergeant De Arango (then a private) was one of the men who, on 19 May, 1915, assisted Private Jacka to clear the Turks from Courtney's Post in Gallipoli (see *Vol. II*, pp. 149-50).

<sup>32</sup> Men of the 14th, until ordered to desist, continued to go out from the trenches to rescue the wounded. It became known later that the Germans themselves went out and brought in Sergeant Croft, who was lying wounded in their entanglement.

<sup>33</sup> The enemy's version is given on p. 283. The 50th Reserve Division's report states that its total casualties for the night were 6 dead and 46 wounded.

<sup>34</sup> See p. 284.

battalion (the 14th) which had carried out the operation just described. At 10.23 the enemy's artillery crashed down upon the Australian trenches practically at the point from which the previous night's raid had issued, and also upon the right of the 6th Brigade farther north. The S.O.S. signal was fired, but the night was that on which the 4th Divisional Artillery was finally taking over from the 2nd, and the batteries appeared to be slow in answering. The enemy's preparatory bombardment, which continued for no less than an hour, blew in the breastwork and dugouts, wholly or partly burying a number of the garrison. Some of the sentries, however, kept throughout a constant observation on No-Man's Land, each man taking it by turns with the others in his bay to jump up and look over the parapet. About an hour after the beginning of the bombardment there came a lull, and in this interval a private, by name Wright,<sup>35</sup> who throughout the tornado had stood observing steadily over the breastwork, went running along the trench warning the garrison that the Germans were coming. With a comrade named Francis<sup>36</sup> and several others he began to pile across the tumbled trenches a hastily built barricade. The Lewis guns of the 19th Battalion were firing, but some of the enemy at this juncture reached the Australian line. An N.C.O. named Boyes,<sup>37</sup> who had been half-buried in tumbled sandbags, managed to struggle free, and, seizing a rifle and scrambling on to the breastwork, found himself face to face with twenty Germans, one of whom was in the act of hitting an Australian on the head with a heavy pistol. Boyes lunged with his bayonet at a German near him, but, as often happened, missed. He himself, after being nearly bayoneted in turn by his opponent, escaped by shooting him and another, and then joined Wright and his fellows behind their barricade.

It was observed that the enemy were throwing bombs, but that these were not bursting. A few Germans scrambled into the shattered trench and came upon two officers of the 14th, almost buried, and a private, Stephens,<sup>38</sup> in the act of trying to

<sup>35</sup> Cpl. F. L. Wright (No. 512; 14th Bn.). Labourer; of Ascot Vale, Vic.; b. Williamstown, Vic., 12 Oct. 1888.

<sup>36</sup> C.Q.M.S. A. C. Francis (No. 1739; 14th Bn.). Farmer; of Dookie, Vic.; b. Danehill, Uckfield, Sussex, Eng., 26 Feb., 1893.

<sup>37</sup> Lieut. F. H. Boyes, 14th Bn. Farmer; of Lardner district, Vic.; b. Rushworth, Vic., 2 May, 1885.

<sup>38</sup> Sgt. A. A. Stephens (No. 4314; 14th Bn.). Labourer; of Nhill district, Vic.; b. Lorquon, Vic., 1895. (Stephens' left eye had afterwards to be removed in a German hospital.)



pull them out. The Germans, after throwing several bombs by which Stephens was wounded, seized him, and endeavoured to tug Lieutenant Mackay<sup>39</sup> and Corporal "Scottie" Urie<sup>40</sup> from the débris, but without success. Being themselves under fire of bombs, they almost immediately withdrew, taking Stephens and leaving the others still half-buried but alive.<sup>41</sup> Considering that the bombardment lasted for nearly two hours, the casualties of the 14th—eleven killed, wounded, or captured—were surprisingly slight. It is probable that the enemy suffered at least as heavily.

German records show that, although a man of the 4th Australian Division had thus actually been captured (in addition to at least one mortally wounded and several dead left in the German lines after Wanliss's raid), the German staff remained unaware of the presence of that division in France, and believed that both 4th and 5th were still in Egypt. This is the more surprising since German documents of May 7 record that a captured Australian officer had then mentioned that the 3rd (*sic*) and 4th Australian Divisions were to be transferred to France. On July 16, within less than three weeks after this raid, the Germans took prisoners of the 5th Division, which had then just relieved the 4th, and on July 19 they captured 300 more. They assumed that the 5th had relieved the 1st; and remained unaware of the presence in France of the 4th until they identified it on the Somme. Such mistakes, though they may have occurred on the British side also, certainly prove that the German intelligence system in Egypt, Marseilles, and at the front did not possess the supernatural accuracy with which it was commonly credited by Germany's opponents. In the report mentioned above, the 3rd Division was evidently confused with the 5th. It was later supposed to have been identified on 15 August, 1916, in reserve west of Armentières. This location was, of course, wrong; the true one, in England, is said by a British authority to have been discovered from an unguarded reference in a report of a football match published by an English newspaper.

The other raid carried out by the enemy that night was against the Epinette Salient in the New Zealand sector, where, after a bombardment which killed 20 New Zealanders and wounded 70, the enemy entered the New Zealand trenches, incidentally surrounding in No-Man's Land a listening-post held by five New Zealand privates. These men fought so long as they had bombs. One managed to escape, severely

<sup>39</sup> Capt. J. Mackay, 14th Bn. Student; of Elsternwick, Vic.; b. Glengower, Vic., 8 Aug., 1894.

<sup>40</sup> Sgt. A. Urie, D.C.M. (No. 2028; 14th Bn.). Seaman; of Melbourne and Glasgow; b. Kinning Park, Glasgow, Scotland, 8 Feb., 1884. Killed in action, 11 April, 1917.

<sup>41</sup> This would, on the face of it, appear an act of humanity on the part of the enemy. According to one account the Germans, as they left, threw bombs at the buried men, but these failed to explode. On the other hand it is possible that the bombs (which certainly were found lying nearby) were merely left behind through the haste of the withdrawal. Bombs were found after almost every such raid.



wounded; one was killed; the remaining three were taken prisoner. The Germans had no success in the New Zealand trenches, and left one of their number wounded in the hands of the defenders.

Up to this point the series of minor raids and counter-raids on the Anzac front—undoubtedly the sharpest that was experienced by Australians on the Western Front<sup>42</sup>—had obviously gone against the Germans. The enemy's raiding parties had unquestionably been the less successful. Whether the actual losses inflicted by the Anzac enterprises were on the average greater than those suffered during raids initiated by the enemy may be doubted, since the formidable bombardments employed by the Germans against the British defences, which even yet were hardly proof against the smallest shells, seldom failed to inflict heavy casualties. The Anzac troops, on the other hand, launched their raids after short, sharp bombardments, chiefly of field-artillery, against which the German dugouts afforded complete protection. The German troops therefore probably suffered few casualties in the preliminary bombardments, except from trench-mortar bombs, and unless the raiders caught a number in their dugouts they probably escaped lightly.

By July 5th the 12th and 13th Brigades (of the 4th Division) had relieved the 1st and 3rd respectively,<sup>43</sup> thus taking over the whole front of the 1st Division in the southern sector of the I Anzac Corps. To the north of the 4th now lay the New Zealand Division, these two formations, by putting all their brigades into the line, having relieved the 2nd, which, as has been previously stated, was required to move to another part of the front. The headquarters staff of II Anzac had arrived at Bailleul and had taken over the billets and offices of the II (British) Corps, which had been ordered to the Somme. Godley had been granted a short period of leave, and the II Anzac staff had not at first been

<sup>42</sup> The fighting, however, did not approach in severity that which had been experienced at Quinn's Post in Gallipoli during May-June, 1915; and, from the point of view of the German command, the "private" raids of 1918 (those made by individual units, companies, or even by a few soldiers on their own initiative) probably had much more serious results.

<sup>43</sup> The 13th Brigade had been attached to the 1st Division since June 21, and had relieved the 3rd Brigade on the night of the 29th. It had been purposely arranged that the 13th should relieve its "parent" formation (the 3rd), and the meeting between the two was an incident long remembered by those who were present.

charged with responsibility for any part of the front. Although certain improvements had still to be carried out in the I Anzac sector, the new troops entered a trench-line very different from that which the older divisions had found there. The 12th Battalion, Rifle Brigade, which had held that front before, and which on July 15th was brought back to it for a few days, furnishes in its official diary a spontaneous and remarkable appreciation of the work of the Australian divisions in the trench-line in that sector:

The trenches were in a very fine state, and much the best the battalion has yet seen. They were mostly 10 feet deep, with parapets varying from 15 feet to 25 thick. There were any number of very good dugouts, and solid paradoss. The whole trenches were very well revetted and were very clean. The wire was good.<sup>44</sup>

As early as the 25th of June the headquarters of the 5th Australian Division had arrived from Egypt and had been established at Blaringhem, and by the beginning of July the greater part of that division had concentrated in the surrounding area. On the 3rd, General Godley having returned some days previously, the staff of II Anzac moved to La-Motte-au-Bois and at midnight took over from I Anzac the command of the Armentières sector. Thus it came about that by July 8th, although the 5th had not yet completely arrived, of the 338,005 troops in the Second Army, 100,000 were Australians or New Zealanders.<sup>45</sup> At this juncture, indeed, the Anzac and Canadian forces provided eight of the Second Army's fourteen infantry divisions. There had already, however, begun a series of movements which was quickly to terminate in the withdrawal of the I Anzac Corps. These were occasioned by developments connected with the great Allied offensive, to which this narrative must now return.

<sup>44</sup> The historian of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R. (holding the trenches opposite the 1st Australian Division) notes this activity in April, 1916: "The enemy builds up his parapet very well, and by increasing the height of his breastwork gradually obtains even better observation over our position than heretofore."

<sup>45</sup> The actual figures were:

1st Australian Division	..	..	..	..	20,141
2nd Australian Division	..	..	..	..	21,650
4th Australian Division	..	..	..	..	21,222
5th Australian Division	..	..	..	..	17,843
New Zealand Division	..	..	..	..	19,512
I Anzac Corps Troops	..	..	..	..	4,579
II Anzac Corps Troops	..	..	..	..	762
Total	..	..	..	..	105,709

The majority of the "corps troops" were, however, British, leaving about 100,000 Australians and New Zealanders.

## CHAPTER XI

### OPENING OF THE OFFENSIVE AND THE MOVE TO MESSINES.

THE preparatory bombardment with which the Somme battle began was one unexampled in previous warfare.<sup>1</sup> It was planned to last for five days, and extended with some intensity not only to the enemy's foremost and intermediate lines, but also to a great part of his second system. Localities which were judged to be of importance were methodically pounded. On one day, for example, the villages were shelled, every gun and howitzer firing rapidly for twelve minutes with high-explosive, and this being followed by bursts of shrapnel to destroy any men who might then be exposed like ants upon a disturbed ant-heap. On another day all the enemy's known batteries were shelled. By the use of shrapnel, lanes were cut through distant wire-entanglements, while the nearer ones were battered down, trench after trench destroyed, and communications blocked. At intervals, partly in order to puzzle the enemy, and partly as a rehearsal, the British artillery laid down the same curtain of shell-fire that would cover the actual infantry attack, the field-guns placing a whirlwind of shrapnel on the enemy's front line, while the 6-inch howitzers fired on targets farther back and the 8- and 9-inch howitzers on a line more distant still, the whole artillery thus creating a barrage of 800 yards in depth. After resting upon the front area, this tremendous curtain would suddenly be advanced on to the lines farther in rear, as if to allow the infantry to attack. Under cover of this fire, small bodies of troops in some parts actually did advance, raid the enemy trenches, and return. On other occasions—it being judged that the Germans, expecting attack when the barrage lifted, would come out of their shelter and man the trenches—the barrage was suddenly laid down again upon the front line, in order to

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<sup>1</sup> This and subsequent bombardments could be distinctly heard in Kent, Surrey, Essex, and, when other sounds were hushed, from the higher parts of London.

inflict loss and deter the enemy from quickly leaving his shelter. During two days of the bombardment rain fell, making it impossible to observe the shooting, and it was accordingly decided to spread the artillery preparation over seven days. The result was a slackening of its intensity. The reports of the guns, though never ceasing for more than a second or two, were not continuous, and, though the wide area under bombardment was never free from the bursts of the Allied shells, the fire—on the British front at least—was scattered, reminding an Australian who saw it of the slow bombardment preceding the assault on Lone Pine in Gallipoli. Nevertheless, on that part of the front which was to be most seriously attacked—the sector from the Ancre southwards—the earthen walls of the enemy's forward trenches were practically everywhere blown or shaken down and the area immediately around the front turned into something like a sea of shell-craters. The German dugouts, however, were too far below the surface to be affected, and even their entrances in the trench-walls and the staircase-shafts leading down to them were seldom smashed.

As between the German and British Armies, this bombardment marked the definite turning of the balance of superiority in artillery against the Germans. The immense military preparation with which Germany had begun the war had at last been overtaken by the civilian effort of Great Britain, supported by huge purchases in America; and British troops, who for so long had been forced to endure, without adequate reply, the weight of German gun-power, were henceforth in an ever-increasing measure able to throw preponderating bombardments upon their adversaries. A somewhat similar reversal of conditions occurred in the air. With the beginning of the bombardment, an air-offensive was also undertaken. On June 25th and the following days British and French aeroplanes attacked the line of balloons which, till then, had been almost continuously stationed behind the German front, and, by setting a number of them on fire with incendiary bullets, caused their almost complete disappearance from the Somme area. Thenceforth in that sector the sky in rear of the British line was almost daily fringed with a line of from ten

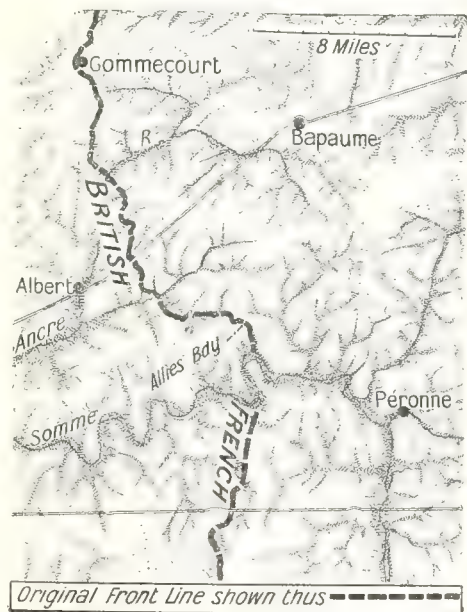


to twenty stationary balloons, while on the German side few were visible, and they far in rear and venturing only nervously into the air, ready to be withdrawn upon the approach of any Allied aeroplane.

At 6.25 a.m. on July 1st the scattered shell-fire was suddenly intensified into a tempestuous concentrated bombardment, directed mainly upon the enemy's front system. In some of those sectors in which No-Man's Land was wide, the infantry scrambled out to approach the German trenches under cover of this fire. At 7.22 the new Stokes mortars opened with a rapid rate of fire, augmenting the storm which descended on the enemy's front line. At 7.30, after five minutes of hurricane bombardment, the firing of two huge mines at La Boisselle and others elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> and the emission of dense clouds of white smoke, the infantry was launched—the British on a front of fifteen and a half miles from Gommecourt, north of the Ancre, to near Maricourt, a mile north of the Somme, and the French between that point and the



British balloons on the Somme battlefield. (From diary of Official War Correspondent, 7 July, 1916.)



<sup>2</sup> At 7.28 four mines were fired at La Boisselle—one (by the Bapaume road) containing 40,000 lb. of ammonal, another (south of the village) 80,000 lb., and two smaller. (See Vol. XII, plate 199.) A big mine on "Hawthorn Ridge," north of the Ancre, was, after anxious consideration, fired at 7.20. It was subsequently held that the explosion of mines before an action was attended by disadvantages almost—if not quite—as great as the advantages.

Amiens-St. Quentin road, some six miles south of the river. The British with thirteen divisions attacked five German divisions,<sup>3</sup> and the French with five attacked three.<sup>4</sup> South of the river, where the Germans, although the bombardment had been terrific, were expecting little more than a demonstration, the infantry of the French I Colonial Army Corps, with characteristic impetuosity and after thorough and intelligent training, penetrated both German lines, with the result that, for some hours at least, it appeared to both sides possible that a break-through by the French troops into the open country behind the last line of German defences might be imminent. The German command in this sector hastily withdrew its troops, highly strained by the bombardment, to a line close in front of Péronne.<sup>5</sup>

Immediately north of the Somme also, the early reports indicated that the first German line had everywhere been entered. Between that river and the Ancre, on the wide undulating tongue of rising land along which the main British thrust was to be directed, the troops of the "New Army" were probably assisted by the fact that the enemy had been partly deceived into believing that the main front of attack extended much farther north than was actually the case.<sup>6</sup> Especially in the southern half of that tongue, south of the Albert-Bapaume road, where the objectives had, upon Haig's insistence, been extended so as to give the British offensive the same direction as that of the French,<sup>7</sup> the troops at an early hour penetrated to their objective, the "green line," at Montauban and Contalmaison. North of the Bapaume road, where the German second line was to have been reached,<sup>8</sup> the 36th (Ulster) Division—undoubtedly one of the finest in the British Army—boldly crossing No-Man's Land during the preliminary bombardment, reached the German trenches

<sup>3</sup> Falkenhayn says five (*General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, p. 262). Six, however, were identified by the British (*Sir Douglas Haig's Command*, by Dewar and Boraston, p. 117).

<sup>4</sup> The Germans had also four divisions in support or reserve in the Somme area, the British six, and the French more. The Allies had thus concentrated over thirty divisions in the Somme area against twelve of the Germans.

<sup>5</sup> Falkenhayn implies that the local German staff lost its head. (*General Headquarters, 1914-1916, and Its Critical Decisions*, p. 265).

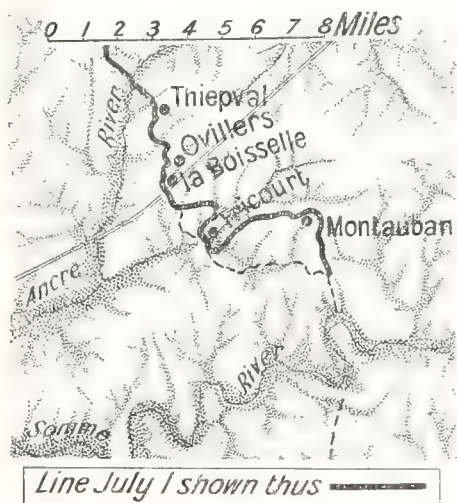
<sup>6</sup> The Germans might otherwise have concentrated here their reserves and artillery. As it was, the main concentration of their artillery was farther north.

<sup>7</sup> See pp. 237 and 238 (footnote).

<sup>8</sup> The objectives are described on pp. 238-239.

north of Thiepval before the enemy machine-gunners could emerge, and, impetuously following close on the heels of the bombardment, easily overran the enemy's front and intermediate systems, and would probably have captured its objective, part of his second line, had it not in over-eagerness pushed on into the fire of its own guns.<sup>9</sup> At Thiepval itself the 15th Lancashire Fusiliers of the 32nd Division captured part of the front line without difficulty, and, leaving sentries over the dugouts in which there were still many Germans, pushed on beyond the ruins of the village.

In and between these several points of success, however, lay six ruined villages; and, although the two on the right, Montauban and Mametz, were captured, the four others in the centre and left, Fricourt, La Boisselle, Ovillers-la-Boisselle, and Thiepval, were not. Mere heaps of rubble, but with the cellars strengthened with steel and concrete and connected with a rabbit warren of deep dugouts, they stood out like promontories against the advancing flood, which penetrated between them. La Boisselle, close to the Bapaume road, was not to be assaulted in the first instance, but "contained," the attackers sweeping past it on either side, while the village was left to be subsequently dealt with by bombing parties. It had been hoped that both La Boisselle and Ovillers would have been rendered untenable by the bombardment, which had been directed on them for that reason with special severity. But, in spite of the explosion of the two



<sup>9</sup> The 36th seized the "Schwaben Redoubt," north of Thiepval, and pushed on towards the "Stuff Redoubt" in the second line without waiting for the bombardment to lengthen. An officer's patrol also moved southwards along the Switch Line towards the German second line at Mouquet Farm, and reported the trench empty.

immense mines at La Boisselle, the German machine-gunners stood to their posts with admirable gallantry. The attacking divisions on this sector were those of the III Corps, which had held the front at Armentières before the arrival of the Australians. Of these, the 8th Division north of the road, crossing the wide No-Man's Land of "Mash Valley" towards Ovillers, with the machine-guns of La Boisselle shooting into its flank, continued to advance until its lines had so dwindled that it had to be withdrawn from the battle that night and sent to another front.

South of the 8th the Tyneside troops of the 34th, whom the Australians had relieved at Bois Grenier, simply charged through the fire of German machine-gun posts in "Sausage Valley," south of La Boisselle; remnants succeeded in establishing posts in the chalky crater of the "great mine,"<sup>10</sup> and even penetrated to Contalmaison. But La Boisselle itself, protected by a terrific barrage and attacked only by a handful of bombers, remained



in German hands; and north of it as far as the Ancre, except for a mere foothold near Ovillers, no permanent progress was made. The successes of the 36th and part of the 32nd Divisions were isolated. In the rest of the area the German machine-gunners had succeeded in setting up their guns in the crater-field before the attacking infantry reached them. The Fusiliers at Thiepval were cut off and captured, and, north of it, the Ulster division was forced to retire, losing 5,500 men in a single day.

<sup>10</sup> The "great mine" was south of La Boisselle. The mine-crater seen by most visitors to the battlefield, north of the main road, was somewhat smaller.



North of the Ancre, where a defensive flank was to be seized by the Fourth Army as far as Serre, and a diverting attack made by the Third Army as far as Gommecourt, both attacks were completely defeated. No-Man's Land was wide; the bold decision to cross it during the preliminary bombardment was not adopted by all commanders; and a number of magnificent divisions dashed themselves to pieces on the insufficiently-broken enemy line. These troops included the 29th Division from Gallipoli, which obtained a temporary foothold on "Hawthorn Ridge," where a big mine had been exploded ten minutes before the attack commenced. The enemy, however, well warned by this explosion that the day and hour of the assault had arrived, laid down a tremendous bombardment, causing the supports to issue late. The divisional commander then decided to renew the attack with the 88th Brigade, and at 9.15 the heroic battalion of Newfoundlanders, which had joined the division in Gallipoli,<sup>11</sup> struggled on without reaching the enemy line until, of 750 men, only 140 were left unwounded. With a loss of 5,000 the famous division had utterly failed. Farther north the 4th and 31st Divisions, though for a time they pierced the first German system south of Serre, were driven back, suffering heavy loss. The failure of these and other penetrating forces to hold on was at the time attributed largely to lack of training and of care in "mopping-up" (that is to say, clearing the rabbit warren of German trenches and dugouts as they overran them); but it was probably due in a much greater degree to attacks by German units on either flank who had beaten off the British in their own sector, and then turned upon the penetrating infantry.

Thus by the night of July 1st the position was that the French had met with unexpected success south of the Somme, having gained all objectives and taken 4,000 prisoners. In the southern half of the sector between the Somme and the Ancre the British, with the French on their right, had

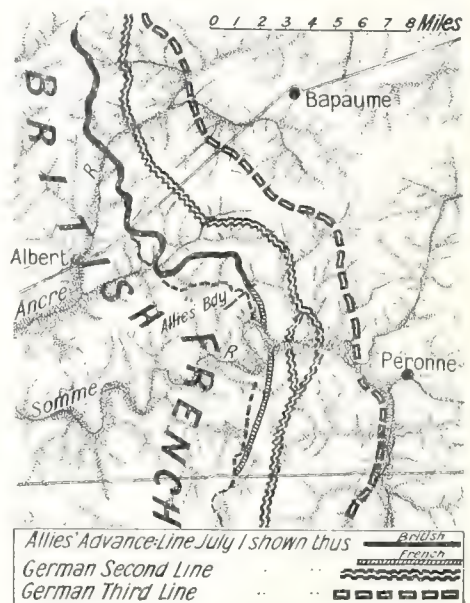
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<sup>11</sup> In September, 1915, taking the place of the 5th Royal Scots, which, having dwindled to the strength of a company, was withdrawn from the division.

advanced upwards of a mile, and were in some parts not far distant from the enemy's second defence-system; and undoubtedly, if this could be quickly attacked before the Germans had time to dig other lines and to bring up troops from other parts of the front, that system also could be broken through. The British had taken 2,500 prisoners. But north of the Bapaume road, though the early reports had been favourable, there had been a failure to attain the objectives laid down. Between that road and the Ancre, where the second line and the ridge on which it lay were to have

been seized, the actual gain was two small footholds in the German front line.<sup>12</sup> North of the Ancre, nothing had been secured. The front of the advance had thus been rendered dangerously narrow. But neither troops nor munitions were available for a renewal of the offensive against the whole of the unattained objectives. Accordingly the operation north of the Ancre, being only of secondary importance, was abandoned. But south of the Ancre the task of reducing Fricourt, La Boisselle, and Thiepval had to be immediately faced.

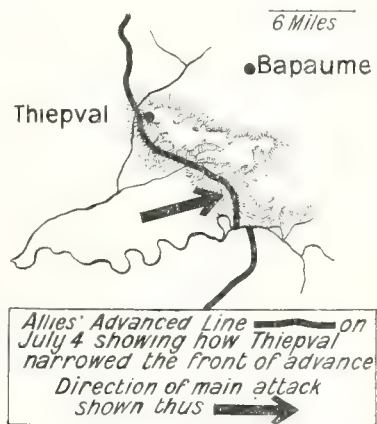
Against Fricourt and La Boisselle new local attacks were forthwith launched. Haig had ordered, before the battle, that reserves "must not be wasted in impossible frontal attacks against strong places—they should rather be thrown in *between* these strong places"; and such was now the general policy. But the disadvantage of such local fighting was that the



<sup>12</sup> Opposite Authille, in the "Leipzig Salient"; and south of St. Pierre Divion. The latter foothold was lost on July 7.

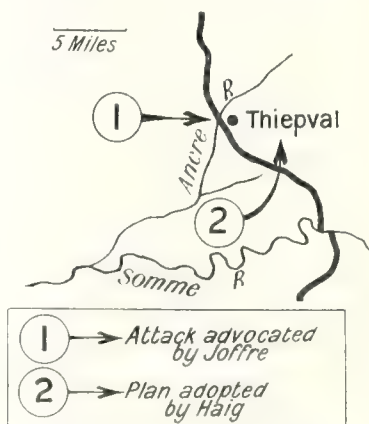
enemy was able to concentrate on it a large proportion of his guns, whose fire against a wider attack might have been comparatively harmless. Fricourt, however, was taken next day with comparative ease; but at La Boisselle the garrison fought tenaciously, protected by a narrow and deadly barrage. In costly attacks by the 19th and 12th Divisions of the III Corps, lasting over several days, this village was gradually captured. But Ovillers remained intact. To the left there was no progress, Thiepval, on the northern edge of the tongue between the Somme and the Ancre, being firmly in German hands.

Both Joffre and Haig recognised that, if the offensive was not to be restricted to a dangerously narrow front, Thiepval must sooner or later be taken. The second German line between the Somme and the Ancre, now faced by the Allies, lay generally along the summit of a ridge which crossed the angle between the two rivers almost like the cross-shaft of an "A."<sup>13</sup> It was at the north-western end of this ridge, on a marked prominence immediately above the Ancre, that Thiepval lay, and in German hands it operated as a solid buttress or gate-post, narrowing the intended breach in the German line. At a conference on July 3rd Joffre urged upon Haig that this dangerous impediment should be removed by renewing the frontal attack. Haig equally desired to remove it, and had on July 1st ordered that the assault should, if practicable, be at once renewed. On the 2nd he had ordered Rawlinson to consider whether Thiepval could be frontally attacked from the west, in conjunction with a converging assault from the south on the Second-Line ridge near Mametz Wood and Contalmaison. For the Thiepval operation the X Corps was



<sup>13</sup> If the north is at the top of the page, the A lies on its side, thus:  $\Delta$

on that day—together with the VIII Corps north of the Ancre—placed under the command of General Sir Hubert Gough of the “Reserve Army,” who would act under Rawlinson. Haig had decided that, if the shell-supply was sufficient for the two attacks, the capture of Thiepval should be forthwith undertaken. But the commanders on the spot were of opinion that a frontal attack would be an operation of great difficulty, requiring thorough preparation; Haig recognised that the German defences from Thiepval to Pozières were “far stronger and more elaborate” than farther south on the same ridge and that the British artillery would not suffice for their reduction unless the attack on the southern half was to be robbed of some of its support. He was against any such transfer of his strength, being intensely anxious to break through the second German defence-system in the southern sector near Longueval before the enemy could bring up reinforcements or complete new lines of defences; he was convinced that the proper method was to continue his thrust where the enemy’s resistance had proved weakest, and not where it was strongest. While his attack in the south proceeded eastwards, he could endeavour to get behind Thiepval from the south-east, rendering its reduction comparatively easy and bloodless. Upon this plan he now decided, and, although Joffre vigorously advocated a renewal of the frontal attack upon Thiepval, Haig, who stood out as a strong man even among strong men, adhered to his new decision, and ordered that, on the front from the Albert-Bapaume road south-eastwards, the eastward thrust should be vigorously continued, while north of that point the effort should at present be restricted to

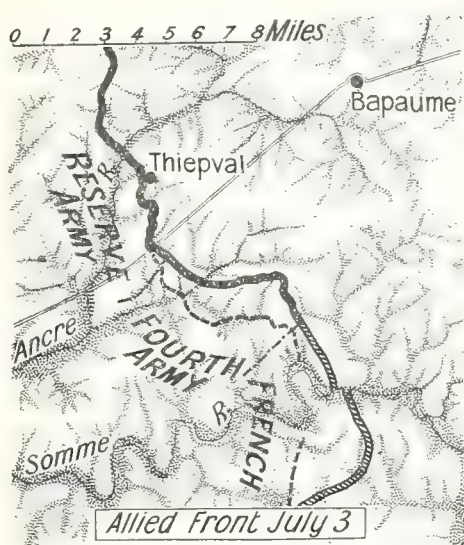




obtaining local or subsidiary gains. The two army corps (VIII and X) on the northern sector, where the advance would for the present be less strongly supported, were accordingly formed into a separate army under General Gough and the staff of the Reserve Army, who on July 3rd were made independent of General Rawlinson. The British force on the less-active northern half of the

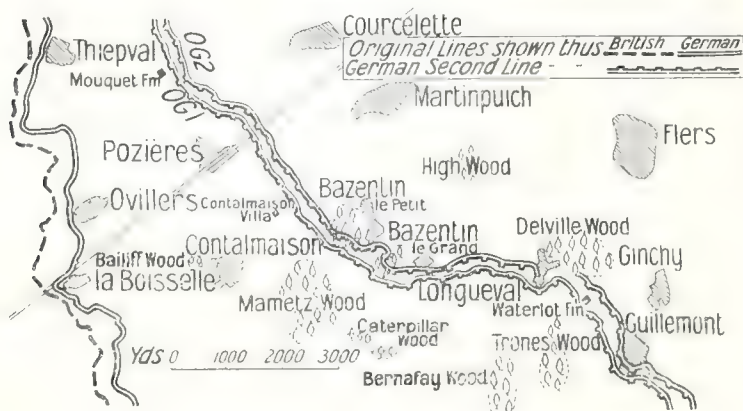
battlefield thus became known as the "Reserve Army," the title "Fourth Army" being retained by the III, XV, and XIII Corps, which, in the southern sector under Rawlinson, were to continue the vigorous eastward thrust, being reinforced for the purpose by all available reserves of men and artillery.

The task of both armies was now a race against time in capturing a number of formidable intervening positions, which had to be stormed or otherwise reduced before a suitable line could be obtained from which the enemy's second-line system in the southern area could be attacked. On July 4th the Fourth Army, though still opposed by the enemy in the eastern outskirts of La Boisselle, captured Bernafay and "Caterpillar" Woods, but found Mametz Wood—immediately in front of the German second line—strongly held. Haig did not, however, anticipate that this obstacle would long delay his progress, which, at this stage, appeared to him to promise at least a reasonable chance of a sweeping victory. "The next few days," he informed his army commanders, "may place us in possession of the enemy's defences from the Ancre to the Somme"; and he instructed the Third Army to prepare to



deliver an attack in case he broke through. The First and Second Armies also were ordered to choose points for attack.

But the capture of Mametz Wood did not follow so rapidly as he had hoped. On the 6th the Fourth Army at last swept beyond La Boisselle, took "Bailiff Wood," and



again entered Contalmaison, but was later driven out of that village. On the same day the Reserve Army obtained a footing in the "Leipzig Salient" in front of Thiepval, and between there and La Boisselle, reached the outskirts of Ovillers. On July 7th the Reserve Army was still only on the edge of Ovillers; the Fourth Army appeared at one time to have taken Contalmaison and Mametz Wood, but was again driven from both. The delay thus caused was highly disappointing to Haig. In a letter written next day to Robertson he said: "It has not been possible to push on fast enough to deprive them (the Germans) of the possibility of bringing up reserves." "We have to be prepared," he stated, "for a struggle lasting for several weeks, and very exhausting to both sides," although "signs of serious demoralisation" had been evident in many of the enemy's units.

By July 11th, after repeated attacks, Mametz Wood and Contalmaison had been seized. The enemy, counter-attacking, retook both Mametz and Trones Woods, but on the 12th both

were again taken by the British and a slight advance was made at Ovillers and beyond Contalmaison. The Fourth Army had thus finally gained the last strong positions of the enemy lying in front of his second line on the southern half of the British battle-front.

That line, however, was in some parts no less than three-quarters of a mile distant, and, over the problem of its approach, there occurred at this stage between the Commander-in-Chief and his army commander almost precisely the same difference of opinion as had arisen between Sir Ian Hamilton and Major-General Hunter-Weston before the Second Battle of Krithia in Gallipoli.<sup>14</sup> There Hamilton, the commander-in-chief, had desired "to cross the danger zone by night and overthrow the enemy in the grey dawn," and his junior, Hunter-Weston, had differed. Now it was the subordinate, Rawlinson, who advocated a night advance, while Haig, the commander-in-chief, opposed it with precisely the arguments formerly urged by Hunter-Weston:

The troops are not highly trained and disciplined, nor are many of the staff experienced in such work, and to move two divisions in the dark over such a distance, form them up, and deliver an attack in good order and in the right direction at dawn, as proposed, would hardly be considered possible even in a peace manœuvre. . . . Although the enemy morale is shaken, he is still dangerous to take liberties with.<sup>15</sup>

Haig, therefore, at first overruled the plan; but upon finding that not only Rawlinson, but all the corps commanders concerned, were heartily in its favour and were opposed to his own alternative of two separate attacks on two portions of the southern front, he gave his assent, though after strong resistance and insisting that special precautions must be taken to meet the possibility of non-success.

The result was the sanctioning of a night advance, the plan formerly discarded at Krithia, although on that occasion the absence of adequate artillery support had rendered the assistance of the dark all the more desirable. Now the artillery for two days heavily bombarded the enemy position.

<sup>14</sup> See Vol. II, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> From the Fourth Army's war-diary.

The troops were, by Haig's orders, informed of the general situation—that the Russians, Italians, and French on their several fronts were heavily pressing the enemy; that the battle was “more than half won,” and “steady, determined, united, unrelenting effort for a few more days will definitely turn the scale in our favour, and open up the road to further successes which will bring final and complete victory within sight.”<sup>16</sup> During the night of July 13th the assaulting units were led out to the “jumping-off” line for the attack, which had been specially marked on the ground with white tape. At dawn, after five minutes' intense bombardment, the assault was launched by seven divisions of the III, XV, and XIII corps<sup>17</sup> on a front extending from near Contalmaison to Trones Wood. Its success was brilliant. The second line was seized along almost the whole front of attack, and near “High Wood,” on the summit of the ridge, the enemy showed signs of breaking. British and Indian cavalry had been brought up in readiness for a possible advance into open country, and a few squadrons were now sent forward into High Wood, from which they looked out over the wide valley behind the German second line to the Bapaume ridge and the open country beyond. The trench-system which the troops of both sides had believed impregnable had again almost been broken through, a fact which henceforth affected the outlook, certainly of the British troops and their commanders, and probably of the Germans also.

At the beginning of the Somme battle the enemy had constructed only one line of defence beyond the point now reached—the incomplete third system running through Le Sars and Flers, near the bottom of the valley across which the cavalry looked. In the interval, however, he had hastily laid out not only a “switch” trench joining this third line to the intact defences north of the British thrust, but also certain other works on the ridge on which his second line lay. These

<sup>16</sup> The honesty which caused Haig to avoid giving his men any easy assurance of immediate victory is characteristic.

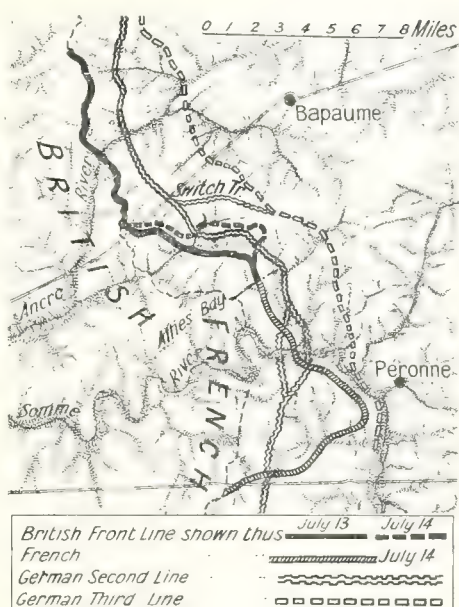
<sup>17</sup> From left to right—the 34th, 1st, 21st, 7th, 3rd, 9th, and 18th Divisions.



could doubtless have been at once pierced on a narrow front, had there been at hand any fresh force sufficient to establish or widen the breach in the second line at High Wood; but in truth no method had yet been devised by which advantage could readily be taken of a breach on a narrow front through a line held by staunch troops; nor, on the Western Front, was such a method ever invented. Whenever danger of a "break-through" occurred,

the defending side naturally attacked it as men do a bush-fire, from its flanks, and such eruptions always tended to be beaten down to a narrow point, when they could be easily stamped out. So long as the defender had reserves of good morale, he could speedily bring to a halt any narrow advance, even in unfortified country. The opening which seemed for a few hours to exist at High Wood was speedily closed—the enemy having recovered himself—so that two days later<sup>18</sup> the British were forced to withdraw from that isolated and advanced position. The only sure means of further progress appeared to be to bring up the artillery, and, after thorough preparation, deliver an assault upon the enemy's new positions before he had time to strengthen and extend them.

By this time, both in the first advance and in the subsequent effort to press without delay the advantage which had been gained, nearly 100,000 men had been lost.<sup>19</sup> In those few days the flower of the "New" Army had fallen. Haig had thrown in twenty-five divisions, of which twenty-two had been on the Somme, either in the line or in reserve,

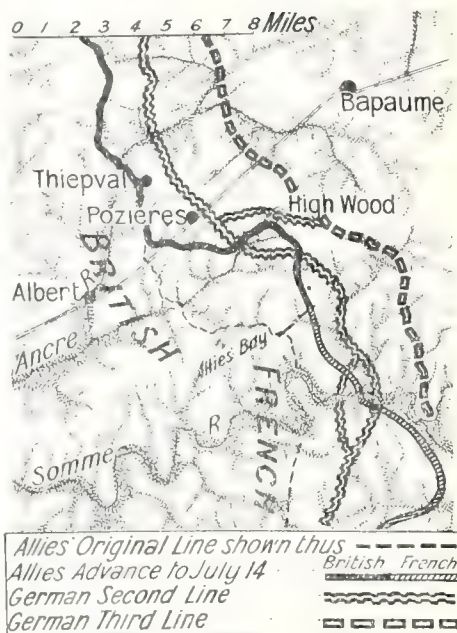


<sup>18</sup> This fighting is described with somewhat more detail in *Chapter xiv*.

<sup>19</sup> The figures quoted are those for July 1 to 16. The infantry of the 34th Division in three days (July 1-3) lost 6,591 officers and men, *viz.*—101st Brigade, 2,299; 102nd Brigade, 2,324; 103rd Brigade, 1,968.

when the battle began, and six, withdrawn exhausted,<sup>20</sup> had been despatched to other armies. In their place, the quieter parts of the front had been "milked" (as the phrase was) to obtain ten fresh divisions for the Somme battle; three of these had been already thrown in, five were still intact in reserve, and two on their way to the Somme. Unfortunately, however, the examination of the prisoners captured on July 14th showed that

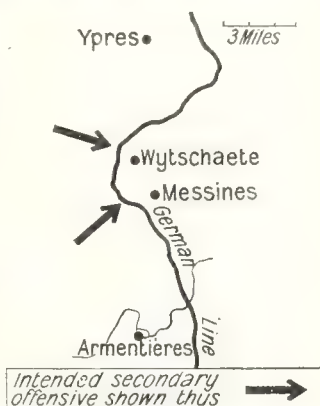
the Germans had been reinforcing their line as rapidly, having brought eight divisions into the line opposing the British, in addition to the six originally there. These had been obtained largely by "milking" the German front facing the French between Chaumes and Rheims. A small proportion, however, had been withdrawn from sectors opposite the British: a reserve division had been brought southwards from Cambrai; as early as July 5th it was reported that the 13th Jäger Battalion, which had formed part of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division holding the Sugar-loaf Salient south of Armentières, had been identified on the Somme;<sup>21</sup> by July 13th nine battalions from the Lille-Lens area were believed to have transferred thither. There thus appeared to be evidence that the enemy had begun to withdraw at least single regiments or battalions from the quiet portion of his front opposite the Anzac and other corps of the First and Second Armies, in order to meet the desperate thrusts of the Fourth Army on the Somme.



<sup>20</sup> In addition, some exhausted brigades (including the 102nd and 103rd of the 54th Division) had been sent away, their divisions absorbing in place of them fresh brigades from other divisions.

<sup>21</sup> The correctness of this report was afterwards questioned by the intelligence staff of the Second Army.

Such "milking" had, of course, been anticipated, and, in order either to prevent it or to take advantage of it if it had occurred, it had recently been planned<sup>22</sup> that one of the British offensives originally contemplated by Haig and Joffre as a preliminary feint should be launched, not before, but after, the commencement of the Somme offensive. The operation chosen by Haig for this purpose had been an attack by the Second Army against the Messines Salient—the great forward bulge in the German line between Armentières and Ypres.<sup>23</sup> On the 14th of January, 1916, Haig asked General Plumer to consider three schemes of attack—one of them being against Messines. As far back as July, 1915, during Sir John French's régime, Plumer had been considering plans for this enterprise, and they had been approved in November, 1915, by General Robertson, then chief of French's staff. The attack, which would be preceded by the explosion of a large number of deep-level mines, would be launched by twelve divisions, with three others in reserve. On May 28th, when ordering his army commanders to initiate the various activities already described, in order to divert attention from the Somme, Haig had warned them that this offensive by the Second Army "on a large scale" might take place either before or after that on the Somme;<sup>24</sup> two days later he directed that preparations for the Messines offensive should be pushed on with all possible speed, and on June 16th informed his army commanders that if the enemy, by hurrying



<sup>22</sup> See p. 330.

<sup>23</sup> A subsidiary offensive in Flanders had also been considered in connection with the plan for making preparatory attacks *before* the Somme offensive (see p. 220).

<sup>24</sup> Haig's order stated: "Preparations for taking the offensive on a large scale are being made on two sections of our front, *viz.*—

(a) By the Second Army, and

(b) by the Fourth Army and a portion of the Third Army.

"It is not yet certain which of these attacks will be launched first." Army commanders, however, were instructed to make their preparations upon the supposition that the Somme offensive (b) would be launched first.

to the Somme all his available reserves, checked that advance at the Second Line Ridge, but left himself weak in the north, the main British offensive might be transferred to Messines, British reserves from the Somme being rapidly brought thither for the purpose.<sup>25</sup>

At the beginning of June the deep mines for the Messines offensive were approaching completion, but a vast amount of work remained to be done on roads, railways, and ammunition dumps, and important details were still under consideration<sup>26</sup> by Major-General Harington,<sup>27</sup> the new chief of the general staff of the Second Army. Plumer, always warmly disposed towards the Australian and New Zealand troops, had intimated to G.H.Q. that he was "most anxious to use the Anzac Corps in the offensive on the Second Army front."<sup>28</sup> In his plan he allotted them the task of attacking Messines itself, in the right centre of the operation.<sup>29</sup> He and Harington discussed the project on several occasions with Birdwood and White, who, at Plumer's request, though conscious of their inexperience of large operations on the Western Front, submitted a plan. In the middle of that month the movement of Australian troops to the projected front of this attack was ordered, and commenced; on June 17th the 7th Infantry Brigade, withdrawn from Armentières, relieved part of the 24th British Division in the Wulverghem sector, opposite Messines. Next day the

<sup>25</sup> This measure, it was explained, was contemplated as a possible alternative to the later phases of the plan of offensive on the Somme.

<sup>26</sup> For example, it was now decided that any German guns which might be captured intact in the area up to the "Oosttaverne Line" (the German reserve defence-line behind Messines) should be saved for possible use, and not destroyed unless it became quite clear that the Oosttaverne Line could not be gained and held.

<sup>27</sup> General Sir Charles H. Harington, G.B.E., K.C.B., D.S.O., p.s.c. Chief of Staff, Second Army, 1916/17, and of British Force in Italy, 1917/18; Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 1918/20. Officer of British Regular Army; of London; b. Chichester, Eng., 31 May, 1872.

<sup>28</sup> His chief-of-staff wrote to G.H.Q. on April 28: "He (Plumer) is very anxious to keep the Anzac Corps in the Second Army. He knows many of the officers. . . ."

<sup>29</sup> The allotted corps were, from left to right: V Corps—3rd, 5th, and 20th Divisions; new corps—1st, 2nd, and 24th Divisions; I Anzac Corps—1st and 2nd Australian Divisions, and New Zealand Division; II Corps—23rd, 38th, and 41st Divisions. The whole force was designated, in a document of June 4, the "Reserve Army," but would be under Second Army.



2nd Brigade began to come into the line of the 24th Division astride of the River Douve, on the right of the 7th.<sup>30</sup> Both brigades were under the commander of the 24th Division until, on July 4th, the headquarters of the 2nd Australian Division arrived and took control of this front. Next day the 2nd Divisional Artillery and part of the 1st took over the gun-positions from the British batteries. The strength of the artillery allotted approached that of the army on the Somme, comprising, if the offensive was launched by July 7th,

180 howitzers of 6-inch and over, or more than 275 if it was deferred to the end of that month. One huge 15-inch howitzer<sup>31</sup> had already arrived, and emplacements were forthwith begun for sixty-seven heavy guns and also for forty field-batteries, to be located mainly behind hedges, the positions being screened overhead with camouflage netting.<sup>32</sup> On Hill 63, directly facing Messines, the Australian engineers and pioneers began the construction of some thirty observation-posts for the artillery, and plans were in preparation for bivouacking the attacking force behind hedges and under trees. Extra dressings, blankets, and stretchers were drawn by the medical staff. On July 3rd the headquarters of the I Anzac Corps handed over control of the Armentières front to General Godley and the staff of the II Anzac Corps and moved to Bailleul, where it relieved the staff of the V Corps at the ancient *Mairie*.

By then, however, it was already becoming improbable that the offensive against Messines would be undertaken. It would have meant relaxing the effort on the Somme, and, although the Anzac staff was not yet aware of the fact, Haig, in answer to an appeal from Joffre, had by June 28th prepared



<sup>30</sup> At the end of the month the two Australian brigades opposite Messines were shifted slightly northwards along the line.

<sup>31</sup> Manned by men of the Royal Marine Artillery.

<sup>32</sup> Generally open netting, somewhat similar to that of cricket or tennis nets, with scattered bunches of grass or shreds of hessian threaded through it.

"a scheme . . . for the withdrawal of fresh formations" to enable the struggle on the Somme to be continued "with such vigour as will force the enemy to abandon his attacks on Verdun." On June 30th it had been arranged between G.H.Q. and the Second Army that the I Anzac Corps should be held ready for sending south at any moment. On July 2nd the 1st and 2nd Divisions with corps headquarters were placed under orders to move at twenty-four hours' notice. The actual transfer, however, was not ordered, and local preparations for the Messines offensive had been resumed when, on July 7th, the order arrived for the immediate transfer of the corps to the Fourth Army, the move to be completed by noon on July 13th. The documents and plans concerning the Messines attack were handed back to the staff of the Second Army, all notion of that operation being then, apparently through the withdrawal of the necessary forces, temporarily abandoned.<sup>33</sup> The secret had been well kept, and few of the Australian troops then in front of Messines were aware that such an offensive had been contemplated.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, by

<sup>33</sup> General Plumer on July 10 wrote that an attack on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge was "under present circumstances . . . impracticable." Haig does not appear to have allotted him, up to that time, any definite force for the offensive, although his requirements had been discussed.

<sup>34</sup> The line occupied for rather more than a fortnight by the 2nd and 7th Brigades in front of Messines extended from "Donnington Hall" to "Shell Farm." It was overlooked by the enemy in Messines, the buildings of which at that time still crowned the opposite hill; and some of the communication trenches were so shallow, straight, and exposed to view that parts of the line could not be approached through them by daylight. German sniping was bold and accurate. Captain R. J. Lewis (of Darwin, Northern Territory), one of the company commanders of the 25th Battalion, was shot through the head on the morning on which the battalion entered the line. Active patrolling was started at once by the Australians, and Lieutenant A. W. Phillips (of Charters Towers, Q'land), patrol officer of the 25th, was severely wounded while scouting.

Gas warfare was active on this front. After the German gas attack of June 16/17 (*see p. 191*) cylinders were brought up and installed behind the parapet in the Australian sector and elsewhere. A discharge of gas was ordered for the night of June 29, should the wind be favourable. On the 7th Brigade front, during the early part of that evening, two cylinders were struck by a German shell, and began to leak, but the leak was stopped. At 9 a.m. another cylinder was struck, and leaked, but this also was stopped. On the front of the 2nd Brigade the German shell-fire knocked down part of the parapet, preventing the discharge of 33 of the cylinders. Later in the night, as the wind freshened, the 27th and 28th Battalions discharged their gas, each for some twenty minutes. On the front of the 7th Battalion, however, the gas was not released until the following night. A detachment of infantry, "splendidly organised and trained by Lieut. Fitzgerald, 5th Bn., A.I.F.," made a barrage with smoke candles.

It was noted that the enemy flares, which were sent up to inform his artillery of the arrival of the gas-cloud, were on this occasion white stars, bursting at the summit of their ascent into red and green; this had obviously been contrived to avoid their being imitated or confused with any British signal.

July 7th General Plumer, in response to a suggestion from G.H.Q., was contemplating an operation for the same purpose by a smaller number of troops in quite a different area.

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The 25th and 27th Battalions took part, as has been related (*p. 266*), in the raids on the night of June 28. On the afternoon of July 4 the enemy opened a hurricane bombardment on the trenches of the 27th Battalion, killing Captain J. W. Blacket (of Kent Town, S. Aust.), Lieutenant W. W. Hosking (of Norwood, S. Aust.), and several men. On the night of June 25 the German 211th Reserve Infantry Regiment apparently tried to carry out a silent raid against part of the line held by the Australians. A small patrol of the 8th Battalion was working through No-Man's Land in front of the sector held by its unit, when it met a large party of Germans. The Australian patrol withdrew into its lines, as did the men who were out in the neighbouring listening-posts. Fire was then opened on the enemy while he was in the act of cutting the Australian wire. He was driven off, and some scouts, going out, found two dead Germans on the wire, of whom they brought in one. The enemy shortly afterwards appeared again, but withdrew when fired on. The body of the other dead soldier was afterwards found to have disappeared, the German party having evidently returned in order to bring back its dead and thus avoid being identified.

The other chief incident of this short tour at Messines was a "sham raid," carried out by the artillery of the 24th Division on the night of July 5, when the British guns laid down upon a sector of the German trenches a bombardment exactly similar to that accompanying a raid. The enemy believed that a raid had actually taken place, and his infantry, which had evidently withdrawn, was presently observed bombing its way back along trenches that had never been invaded.

The two Australian brigades were relieved by the 124th and 72nd British Brigades (24th and 41st Divisions). The latter noted that much gear, left behind by part of the 7th Australian Brigade, had to be salvaged and sent in.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE BATTLE OF FROMELLES

ALTHOUGH the vast requirements for reinforcements on the Somme forced Haig to give up the plan for the important side-stroke at Messines, he was still very anxious that forces holding the rest of the British line should endeavour, by all possible activity, to pin down the German divisions on their front and prevent their being brought round to meet his strokes upon the Somme. An appeal had been sent to the First, Second, and Third Armies to endeavour to achieve this result by continuing their programme of raids. On July 3rd General Plumer of the Second Army passed on this appeal to his corps commanders, at the same time informing them that, for the sake of the Somme offensive, strict economy in ammunition was necessary. On the 5th, after the discovery that the 13th Jäger Battalion had been sent south from the front of the II Anzac Corps, he reiterated the appeal. Accordingly, General Godley on July 7th issued to the II Anzac Corps—which, now that the 4th Division was leaving for the Somme, comprised only the New Zealand and 5th Australian Divisions—the following order:—

It is imperative that raids and all possible offensive should be undertaken at once by both divisions of the corps in order to make a certainty of holding on our front such German troops as may now be there.

Raids must therefore take place immediately and must be on a larger scale than has hitherto been attempted—about 200 men or a company. . . . The Corps Commander wishes to impress on divisional commanders, and begs them to impress it on their subordinates, that we must fight now, at once, in order to give help to our comrades fighting desperately in the south, and that however little we may be ready, or however difficult it may be, we should never forgive ourselves if we did not make the necessary effort, and, if necessary, sacrifice, to help them.

Such instructions obviously imposed upon the divisional commanders the duty of straining every nerve to undertake immediate operations, even if these were likely to involve loss. Although the 5th Division had not at that time reached the front area, its commander, General M'Cay, consented to launch one or more raids with his inexperienced troops.



Subsequent events caused this intention to be abandoned, and the whole raid-programme of the corps during the next ten days had to be provided by the New Zealand Division.

These small enterprises could no longer be carried through with the comparative ease of the earlier series. The enemy expected them, and had learnt how they could be anticipated and repelled. On the night of July 9th a party of Maoris of the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion attempted to steal silently into the enemy's lines, it being considered that they were especially suited for such methods. They found, however, the wire uncut, and, upon repeating the attempt at another point the following night, they narrowly escaped being cut off by two parties of the enemy who were creeping, with equal stealth, round their flank. The next night, July 11th, a raiding party of the 2nd Battalion, Otago Regiment, found the enemy's wire insufficiently cut, and failed; on the 13th a company of the 1st Otago attempted to raid, but found the Germans—in this case belonging to a Saxon division,<sup>1</sup> and therefore supposed to be of weaker morale—entirely ready. Some of the New Zealanders, with splendid determination in the face of machine-gun fire and bombs, forced their way through a gap in the enemy wire, but eventually the whole were most bloodily repulsed.<sup>2</sup> On the following night, when a trench-raid was launched by the 4th Battalion, New Zealand Rifle Brigade, after a heavy and carefully planned bombardment, the raiders entered without difficulty, but found the trench so thoroughly obliterated that the traces of the enemy were insufficient to enable his dispositions to be ascertained.

Raiding was therefore at this time no easy process. Moreover, it is difficult to see how it could cause any serious anxiety to the enemy, and German accounts now available make it quite evident that it did not. If the enemy forces were to be pinned to this front until the stroke at the Somme had penetrated deep enough to be decisive, some more impressive action was obviously called for.

It happened that at this juncture there was in contemplation an attack with a very different object. It has already

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<sup>1</sup> The 24th, XIX Corps.

<sup>2</sup> The loss was 52 killed or missing, and 123 wounded. Four officers were killed, four wounded. Only six of the party returned without wounds.

been mentioned" that on July 5th prospects of a break-through on the Somme appeared to Haig so promising that he ordered the other armies to prepare attacks in case the enemy was thoroughly beaten there. In that event the Third Army, on the northern flank of the battle, would launch an offensive; but Haig on July 5th also ordered—

The First and Second Armies should each select a front on which to attempt to make a break in the enemy's lines, and to widen it subsequently.

He pointed out that the German armies on the Somme might contemplate withdrawal, and in that case the First and Second British Armies, by attacking, "might turn the retreat on the Somme into a general retreat."

In considering what answer he should make to this suggestion, General Plumer of the Second Army ruled out the previously-projected offensive at Messines as being then impracticable; similarly, an offensive at Ypres, though contemplated as a possible operation at some future date, would be premature. On all that part of the front, Plumer said, the enemy showed "no sign of weakening his forces. . . . On the contrary he is working very hard to strengthen his defences." Farther south, however, where the Second Army joined the First opposite the Sugar-loaf Salient, the Germans held their front more lightly. Plumer was aware that an attack in this sector had previously been advocated by General Haking, the experienced and distinguished officer commanding the northernmost corps—the XI—of the First Army,<sup>4</sup> and had agreed that the I Anzac Corps, when undertaking its series of raids, should also take a small part in Haking's attack, if delivered. The operation had not eventuated; but Plumer now, writing to the commander of the First Army, suggested a somewhat more extensive project:

Dear Monro,

. . . the only place I can attempt to "make a break" would be somewhere on my right—in conjunction with your left. If it should happen that your left was the place you chose, we might make a joint arrangement. . . .

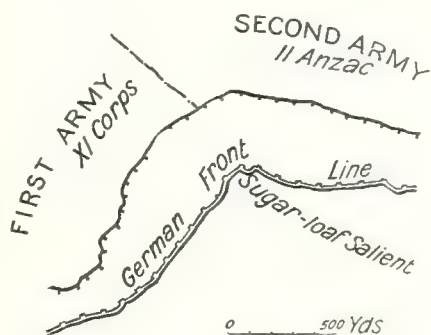
Yours very sincerely,

HERBERT PLUMER.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 317-318.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 258-259.

Plumer considered that this plan "presented possibilities" if the German garrison of the sector was "still further weakened," but he could spare only one division for the offensive, and informed G.H.Q. accordingly. Monro, at a conference of his corps commanders on July 8th, directed Haking to draw up plans for such an offensive, and to assume (for the purposes of his scheme) that his corps, being the northernmost of the First Army, would be reinforced by a division from the Second Army, together with some of that division's



artillery. Haking's scheme, which was an ambitious one, aiming at the capture—partly by means of a feint—of the Fromelles-Aubers Ridge a mile behind the enemy's front, was presented to Monro next day. It was, however, rejected, Monro being of opinion that the capture of the Aubers-Fromelles Ridge, though of great advantage if the rest of the front was to remain stationary, would be of little assistance in case of the advance on the Somme, for which he had been asked to prepare. He therefore informed G.H.Q. that his objectives in such an event would be Hill 70 near Loos and, possibly, Vimy Ridge, which would be of great value if Haig broke through in the south. Haking was accordingly informed on July 12th that he would not be ordered to carry out his project.

By then, however, the situation on the Somme had changed. The capture of Mametz Wood having taken longer than had been anticipated, the Germans had been able to bring up reinforcements, and a minor offensive elsewhere was now required, not so much for the purpose of testing the enemy's strength and perhaps driving him back, as for that of pinning his forces to their existing fronts and preventing their movement to the Somme. On the eve of the second great effort on the Somme, to which he attached

high hopes,<sup>5</sup> Sir Douglas Haig received information that the Germans had transferred to that front from the Lille-Lens area some nine battalions as reinforcements. Nothing would be more likely to prevent further transfers than a threat, made by the First and Second Armies, of a British advance upon Lille. The general staff, now looking into the several operations recently suggested, concluded that the attack on Aubers-Fromelles, undertaken as "an artillery demonstration," would "form a useful diversion and help the southern operations." The First and Second Armies could concentrate at their point of junction an artillery force of some 288 field-guns and 72 field-howitzers—equivalent to the artillery of six divisions—which, together with a few "heavies," could keep up a show of preparation for at least three days upon a front of 15,000 yards. The action could, "for the present, be purely one of artillery," combined perhaps with a few raids,<sup>6</sup> but designed to force the enemy to believe that an important offensive was contemplated. This bombardment could be arranged to take place after the projected offensive of July 14th on any date "when it becomes evident that this front is likely to be milked."

It will be observed that this scheme was very different from that for which Haking had been asked to draw plans. His object had been to seize with infantry an important ridge, and his method to make a feint with strong bombardments farther south, and then—when the enemy had moved some of his guns to the area bombarded—to disclose his artillery on the true front of attack, and, after four hours' bombardment, to advance. The attack now suggested was of quite another character—a boldly advertised, prolonged bombardment, with the object of holding the enemy in suspense, expecting an infantry offensive that would

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<sup>5</sup> On July 12, writing to his army commanders, he said that their activity had been very effective in preventing the transfer of German reserves to the Somme. "The result is that we have maintained, and can still maintain, superior forces at the decisive points, and, despite the great strength of the enemy's defences, we are already more than half through them. There is justification for feeling confident of breaking through the remainder in the near future."

<sup>6</sup> It was pointed out that, if 330,000 rounds were made available, each gun could be allotted 300 per day for three days. With this, it was claimed, each gun could cut wire on 50 yards of front, and still have ammunition sufficient to break down the German parapet.



probably not take place. It was, however, suggested that a scheme should be worked out for an infantry advance to the Aubers Ridge, in case this might "at a later stage" become advisable.

On the eve of the offensive of July 14th the deputy-chief of Haig's general staff, Major-General Butler,<sup>7</sup> was sent northwards to the headquarters of the First Army to propose a demonstration on and near Haking's front. He took with him from G.H.Q. Major Howard<sup>8</sup> of the general staff, and at Chocques saw Sir Charles Monro, and afterwards, in conference, Major-Generals Barrow<sup>9</sup> and Harington, chiefs-of-staff of the First and Second Armies. This conference agreed that a demonstration could most suitably be made in the sector suggested, each army being able without difficulty to concentrate there a force of infantry and artillery and to provide ammunition. It was decided that an infantry attack should form part of the demonstration, the First Army probably providing two divisions, and the Second Army one. The bombardment was to begin on July 14th with all the artillery then on the spot, and was to last about three days. Haking's plan would in general be adopted, and he would command in the operation. G.H.Q. would provide a supply of shells additional to that which the two armies could allot from their ammunition reserves. General Butler afterwards, at La-Motte-au-Bois, discussed these plans with Generals Plumer, Godley, Harington, Franks,<sup>10</sup> and Gwynn, and Plumer gave his assent to the operation, pointing out that he had already discussed it with Monro.

<sup>7</sup> Lieut.-Gen. Sir R. H. K. Butler, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., p.s.c. Commanded 2nd Lincs. Fusiliers, 1914, and 3rd Inf. Bde., 1914/15; Chief of Staff, First Army, 1915; Deputy C.G.S., G.H.Q., British Armies in France, 1916/18; commanded III Army Corps, 1918/19. Officer of British Regular Army; of Northern Ireland; b. Bombay, India, 28 Aug., 1870.

<sup>8</sup> Col. H. C. L. Howard, C.M.G., D.S.O., p.s.c. G.S.O. (2), G.H.Q., British Armies in France, 1916; G.S.O. (2), 19th Division, 1917; G.S.O. (1), 48th Division, 1917/18. Officer of British Regular Army; of Wygfair, St. Asaph, North Wales; b. 30 Aug., 1882.

<sup>9</sup> Gen. Sir G. de S. Barrow, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., p.s.c. Chief of Staff, Cav. Div. and Cav. Corps, 1914/15; commanded Mhow Cav. Bde., 1915, and 1st Indian Cav. Div., 1915; Chief of Staff, First Army, 1916/17; commanded 4th Cav. Div., 1917/18. Officer of Indian Regular Army; of South Devon, Eng.; b. Naini Tal, India, 25 Oct., 1864. (See also *Vol. VII* of this series.)

<sup>10</sup> Maj.-Gen. Sir G. McK. Franks, K.C.B., p.s.c. Commanded 31st Heavy Bty., R.G.A., 1914; A.A. and Q.M.G., 2nd Cav. Div., 1914/15; M.G.R.A., Second Army, 1915/17; commanded 35th Division, 1917/18. Officer of British Regular Army; of Ballyscaddane, Knocklong, Co. Limerick, Ireland; b. Edinburgh, Scotland, 16 Oct., 1868.

Haking's scheme of attack was therefore approved, its object (according to the First Army order issued on July 15th) being

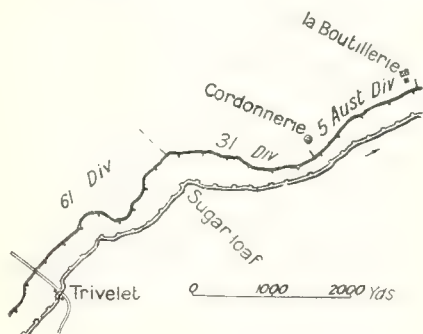
to prevent the enemy from moving troops southwards to take part in the main battle. For this purpose (it was added) the preliminary operations, so far as is possible, will give the impression of an impending offensive operation on a large scale, and the bombardment which commenced on the morning of the 14th inst. will be continued with increasing intensity up till the moment of the assault.

It may be noted that this order cast aside the intention of secrecy. On the contrary, the operation was to be advertised, the demonstration beginning with the bombardment—a wise policy if no subsequent assault had been intended, but suicidal if the intention was to deceive the enemy by a subsequent successful infantry attack. The force available was to be Haking's own corps and—lent by the Second Army—the 5th Australian Division. The operation was to take place as soon as possible.

On July 8th—the very day when Haking was instructed to draw up his plan—the 4th Australian Division had been suddenly ordered to follow the rest of the I Anzac Corps to the Somme. This decision had not been arrived at without hesitation. The Chief of the General Staff at G.H.Q., on receiving Murray's comments upon the training of the 4th and 5th Divisions, had written to General Plumer expressing doubt whether they would be "sufficiently trained to justify their employment in offensive operations on a large scale during the next few months." Birdwood, on the other hand, held that the infantry of the new divisions would prove as well trained as that of their predecessors, and he had been allowed to take the 4th into his corps on condition that, if in General Plumer's opinion it proved insufficiently trained for the tasks likely to be undertaken by Birdwood's corps, it should be re-transferred to II Anzac, again changing places with the New Zealand Division. When permission was finally given for the 4th to follow the 1st and 2nd to the Somme, the division was directed to leave behind its artillery, which was considered too inexperienced for employment in that battle. The 5th Division, ordered up to relieve the

4th, began on the same day its first march towards the front area, encountering the troubles common to almost all new divisions unused to the cobble-roads.<sup>11</sup> To hasten the despatch of the 4th Division, the relief was accelerated, the three brigades of the 5th (8th, 14th, and 15th) taking over from those of the 4th (4th, 12th, and 13th) in that order from north to south on the nights of July 10th and 11th. While his battalions were settling down to the strange sights and sounds of the front, and while the half-fledged artillerymen of the 4th Division were inducting those of the 5th into the elaborate defence-system, M'Cay at noon on July 12th in Saily *château* took over from General Cox the command of that sector. Late next evening he was summoned to General Godley's headquarters at La-Motte-au-Bois and informed that his division, being the southernmost in the Second Army, would for a few days be handed over to the tactical control of the XI Corps and First Army for the purpose of attacking the German line. The supplying of its ammunition and food would, however, still be a responsibility of II Anzac and Second Army.

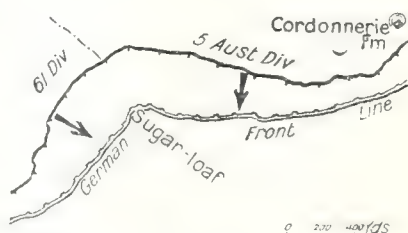
The fact that his division, though last of the A.I.F. to arrive in France, would be the first in serious action, gave M'Cay much gratification. Haking's plan, as then explained to him, was to seize 6,000 yards of German front line—from the Fauquissart - Trivelet road to a point opposite the Boutillerie—with three divisions: the 61st and 31st, of Haking's own corps, would assault the south-western and northern fronts of the Sugar-loaf; the 5th Australian Division would extend the front of attack as far



<sup>11</sup> See p. 112. In the 15th Brigade, which, through a miscarriage of arrangements, had to march at one stage two and a half hours without a halt, large numbers of men "fell out." In the 8th Brigade the 29th (Victoria) Battalion, which included many young soldiers and had to march nineteen miles carrying a weight of 70 lb. per man, was similarly affected. The marching was in most cases far better on the second day than on the first.

as Boutillerie. None of these divisions would have been considered fit for present use in the Somme offensive, the 5th Australian being too new, the 61st a numerically weak<sup>12</sup> Territorial division recently arrived from England, and the 31st lately engaged on the Somme and withdrawn exhausted. The assault being ordered for July 17th, the necessary movements of these divisions were about to begin when, at 2 a.m. on the 14th, Haking learnt that the field-artillery provided for him by Second Army was not, as foreshadowed, that of three divisions but only of two—and those the 4th and 5th Australian, which lacked experience and full training. Furthermore, instead of 300,000 shells for his field-guns, and 30,000 for the 4.5-inch howitzers, he was to receive only 200,000 and 15,000 respectively; he would, moreover, be short of medium trench-mortars, the men of the Australian batteries being considered too raw for employment, except as reinforcements for trained batteries. He therefore wisely decided to narrow his front of attack to 4,000 yards, and to attack with two divisions, the 61st striking at the Sugar-loaf, as already arranged, from the west, and the 5th Australian Division (instead of the 31st) from the north, with its left flank at Cordonnerie.

Each division would now be supported by two divisional artilleries, besides some thirty heavy guns, and a few extra trench-mortar batteries; the Australians would be given fewer trench-mortars than the 61st, but more heavy guns and an additional brigade of field-artillery lent by the 31st Division. The total artillery would be 258 field-guns and howitzers, 64 heavies, and 70 medium trench-mortars, in addition to two 12-inch howitzers on railway trucks, and one or two long-range guns allotted by the headquarters of the



<sup>12</sup> The 61st was sometimes referred to as a "second line" division; by this was meant that it had been used to supply reinforcement drafts to other divisions in France, and had thus been depleted of some of its best elements.



Armies.<sup>13</sup> In order to enable the 5th Division to concentrate, as required, at the extreme south-western end of its front, its neighbour, the New Zealand Division, was to extend to the right, and a British brigade—the 60th—of the 20th Division was brought down from the Ypres area to be temporarily sandwiched between them.<sup>14</sup> The 5th Australian Division would then be massed on the north and the 61st on the south of the old army-boundary.

Attending a conference at XI Corps Headquarters at Hinges on the morning of July 14th, M'Kay learned of the change in the plans, and at a subsequent conference on the 16th Haking issued his final instructions. His plan—in all essentials the same that he had originally devised—was that each division should attack with all three brigades



<sup>13</sup> This provision amounted to a field-gun or howitzer to every 15 yards of front, and of 800 rounds for each field-piece. Other guns were allowed (in all): 6-inch howitzers—4,500; 60-pounders—4,440; 9.2-inch howitzers—1,000; 12-inch howitzers—240; 6-inch (long-range) gun—180; 9.2-inch (long-range) gun—30. The allotment of guns and trench-mortars was:

*To 61st Division.*

Artillery and trench-mortars of 61st Division.

Artillery of 8th Division.

7 medium trench-mortar batteries.

1 heavy trench-mortar battery.

*To 5th Australian Division.*

Artillery and trench-mortars of 5th Aust. Division.

Artillery of 4th Australian Division.

Three field-batteries of 31st Division.

5 medium trench-mortar batteries.

The guns supporting the divisions appear to have been:

	61st Division.			5th Aust. Division.		
Field artillery—						
18-pounders .. ..	96	..	114	..	..	114
4.5-inch howitzers .. ..	24	..	24	..	..	24
Total .. ..	120	..	138	..	..	138
Heavy artillery—						
60-pounders .. ..	12	..	24	..	..	24
6-inch howitzers .. ..	10	..	10	..	..	10
9.2-inch howitzers .. ..	4	..	4	..	..	4
Total .. ..	26	..	38	..	..	38
Medium trench-mortars .. ..	50	..	20	..	..	20
Heavy trench-mortars .. ..	2	..	—	..	..	—

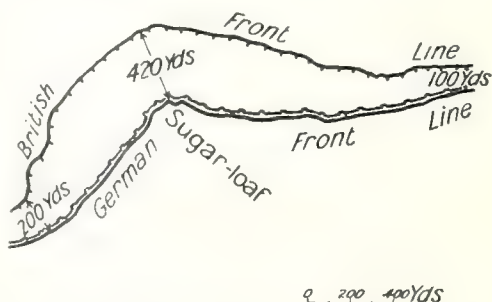
<sup>14</sup> This brigade chanced to be one which seven months previously had held the front opposite the Sugar-loaf, and had taken part in the unsuccessful assault south of that salient on 25 Sept., 1915.

in line, and each brigade with two battalions. They were to go no farther than the enemy's support lines, except to take two ruined farms, Ferme Delangré and Ferme Delaporte, which formed strong-points just beyond the 5th Division's objective; and the order to take these was eventually countermanded.<sup>15</sup>

It was obvious that a plan of assault upon so well established and organised a trench-line must be based upon a sufficient preparatory bombardment; by no other means could troops crossing No-Man's Land be preserved from the enemy's machine-guns, whose cross-fire barred its passage. The bombardment must therefore destroy these, or at least force the enemy to hide his head while the attack was approaching. But the method employed at the beginning of the Somme battle—bombardment of the front trench until the moment when the infantry advanced, the guns then lengthening range on to a line in rear—had on some occasions proved terribly ineffective: where the infantry must advance more than 200 yards before reaching the enemy's position, the Germans had had time to perceive the easing-off of the shell-fire and, before the assault reached them, had emerged from their dug-outs, set up their machine-guns, and swept it away. These facts had been circulated by G.H.Q.; and, seeing that opposite the point of the Sugar-loaf No-Man's Land was 420 yards wide, narrowing gradually to about 100 on the extreme left and varying between 400 and 200 on the right, Haking directed that, while the artillery was still bombarding the enemy's front line, the attacking troops must emerge from their trenches and deploy as closely as possible to the enemy's.<sup>16</sup>

Heeding another warning from the Somme, he arranged that,

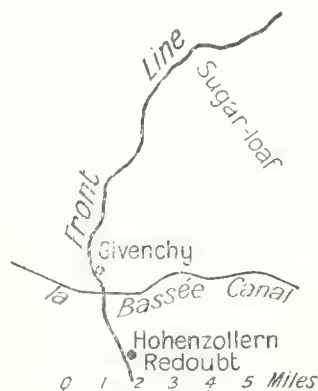
although the enemy's artillery was known to be weak, its ascertained battery-positions should be shelled by a



<sup>15</sup> The order was countermanded on the afternoon of the actual attack.

<sup>16</sup> As the 36th (Ulster) Division had done at Thiepval. See pp. 310-311.

proportion of his heavy guns before and during the action. The plan of an ostentatious three-days' bombardment was, as a matter of fact, not carried out by Haking except farther south.<sup>17</sup> There, to induce the Germans further to weaken their artillery, feint bombardments would be laid down at "touchy" points by the 39th Division at Givenchy, north of La Bassée Canal, and by the I Corps south of the canal as far as the "Hohenzollern Redoubt."<sup>18</sup> In a letter read to all troops on the eve of the day appointed for the assault,<sup>19</sup> he explained, first, the reason for the operation, and then the methods. In describing the latter he said that the feint bombardments in the south would be continued on the morning of the offensive



whilst our guns along the front of our real attack will be getting the exact range of the enemy's trenches without attracting undue notice. When everything is ready, our guns, consisting of some 350 pieces of all descriptions, and our trench mortars, will commence an intense bombardment of the enemy's front system of trenches. After about half-an-hour's bombardment the guns will suddenly lengthen range, our infantry will show their bayonets over the parapet, and the enemy, thinking we are about to assault, will come out of his shelters and man his parapets. The guns will then shorten their range, and drive the enemy back into his shelters again. This will be repeated several times. Finally, when we have cut all the wire, destroyed all the enemy's machine-gun emplacements, knocked down most of his parapets, killed a large proportion of the enemy, and thoroughly frightened the remainder, our infantry will assault, capture, and hold the enemy's support line along the whole front. The objective will be strictly limited to the enemy's support trenches and *no more*.

The rearmost trench of the enemy's front system, it was explained in the orders, would probably be found at from 100 to 150 yards beyond the German front line. Haking believed that, for an advance so limited, the two allotted battalions of each brigade would suffice. The remaining

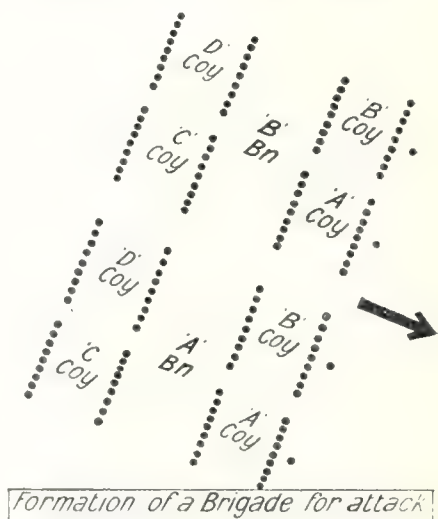
<sup>17</sup> The concentration of artillery on the front of attack was not, in fact, observed by the German staff until July 16 and 17.

<sup>18</sup> To the north the New Zealand Division was to co-operate during the actual operation by making two raids.

<sup>19</sup> July 17 was at that time the day appointed. The issue of this letter, to ensure that the troops had some knowledge of the object and plan of the operations, was probably a wise step. The eleventh-hour postponement of "zero" day, it is true, gave the enemy some chance of obtaining knowledge of the plans; but—except from the reports of his sentries and observers—he did not obtain it.

two were therefore not to be used for assaulting, unless with his express consent, although half of one of them in each brigade could be called on to furnish carrying-parties following the assaulting waves; the remainder would thus be available afterwards to relieve the exhausted fighting troops in the captured line, or to carry forward the operation to Aubers Ridge, if this were then decided on.

The frontage of the 5th Division in the attack—slightly under 2,000 yards—would be rather less than that of the 61st, although the latter lacked a third of its proper numbers, while the Australians were at full strength. Each brigade would thus occupy from 600 to 700 yards of front, and each assaulting battalion from 300 to 350. In passing Haking's orders to his brigadiers, M'Cay apparently reckoned that the men composing each line should be two yards apart, and therefore suggested that the attack should be made in four lines or "waves," each battalion having two half-companies (*i.e.*, 200 men) in each wave;<sup>20</sup> that the first wave should move across No-Man's Land to the enemy's wire, and there lie down ready to attack, the subsequent waves following at intervals of 100 yards. To ensure punctuality, he ordered that his first and second waves must be ready in their own front trenches three hours before the assault; the third and fourth were to assemble in the reserve (or "300 yards") line, from which they must move forward in time to enter the front line just when the earlier waves left it. Similarly, the carrying-parties (half of the several "third" battalions) following farther in rear



*Formation of a Brigade for attack*

<sup>20</sup> Taking the battalions at 800, the extension actually works out to one and a half yards per man. The companies being "in depth" (*i.e.*, the second half-company in a subsequent wave following—and eventually reaching—the first) the men would find themselves under officers whom they knew. The deployment of each battalion on a front of two companies was in accordance with a direction from Haking.



must reach their front line, and stand ready beside their loads, precisely when the last assaulting wave went over. The rest of the "third" battalions<sup>21</sup> must at the same time come forward and hold the front and "300 yards" lines as garrison, while the "fourth" battalions were to take up positions of readiness in the Rue du Quesnes, one and a half miles in rear. During the action six trenches were to be dug across No-Man's Land, two by each brigade, to provide safe communication with the captured position. Stress was laid by M'Cay upon the need for barricading the trenches on the outer flank—or on the inner flank of a brigade in the event of its neighbour failing—and for blocking enemy communication trenches leading out of the new front. He also ordered that the first wave must take the first German trench, the second wave passing over it to the defence-line next beyond,

and so on till all works of enemy first line system . . . are taken. . . . It is the rearmost row of enemy's first line that is to be at once fortified and held when it is taken.

As soon as the first wave had thoroughly cleared the enemy from his front line, it was to "advance farther" and reinforce the other waves. To safeguard the Vickers machine-guns and Stokes mortars, the possible loss of which was at that time seriously regarded, M'Cay directed that they might be brought forward "when it is fairly clear that we hold practically all these trenches," while the Lewis guns might be advanced after the last waves of their battalions. As soon as any machine-guns had been set up in the captured area, they were to fire a short burst in order to impress the enemy.

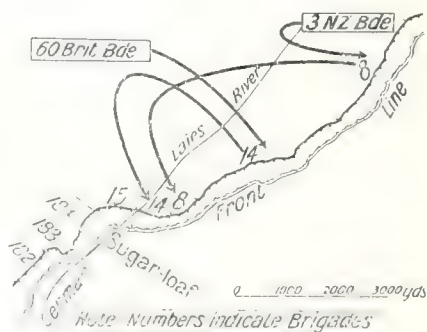
The precise position of the line in the captured trenches was to be signalled to aeroplanes—which would fly over to obtain "contact"—by lighting flares, and to the artillery by erecting flags or screens of red cloth.

The movements of the two divisions to their "jumping-off" areas for the attack began at once. Six battalions of the 5th Australian Division had still not seen the front trenches, and the other six had been there for two days and nights, when, on July 14th M'Cay's first order for the operation was issued, directing the concentration of his three

<sup>21</sup> As will be seen, in the 30th Battalion only one company was available for this duty, three being allotted for work in connection with the assault.

brigades in and behind less than the front then held by the southernmost of them—the 15th (Victorian), commanded by Brigadier-General Elliott. The time allowed for preparatory movement was extraordinarily short, and the procedure entirely strange to most of the troops and staff. But during the nights of July 14th and 15th the 3rd New Zealand (Rifle) Brigade on the left relieved the 8th Australian Brigade, which came out to billets in Fleurbaix. Farther south the 60th (British) Brigade, under Brigadier-General Butler,<sup>22</sup> relieved the 14th—which withdrew to Bac St. Maur—and the north-western part of the 15th. The 15th with two battalions (57th and 58th) then held the front from which the 5th Division's assault was to be launched.

On the next night, July 16th, the 8th and 14th Brigades (in that order from north-east to south-west) passed their attacking battalions into the left and centre respectively of the front held by the 15th Brigade, the latter then shrinking to the right so as to occupy its proper front

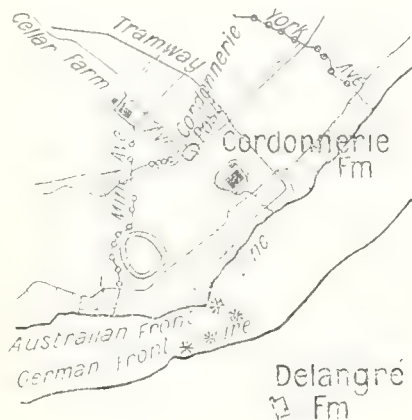
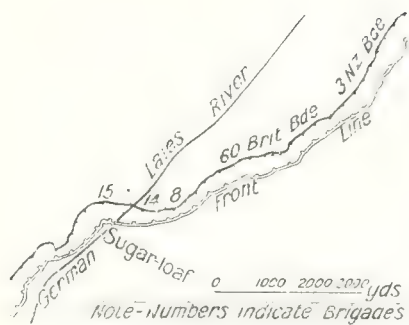


of attack. A mile or more behind each brigade's front was its "third" reserve battalion, and, farther back still, its "fourth." The 61st Division had meanwhile been carrying out somewhat similar movements farther south. Thus at day-break on July 17th both divisions were in a position at least to attempt the launching of the offensive ordered for that day.

It must not be supposed that these and other preparations, crowded within two-and-a-half days, had been carried through without exhausting labour. The two nights had been spent by most of the troops in carrying out the slow movements of relief, and, in addition, the whole of the necessary rifle and machine-gun ammunition, hand grenades, trench-mortar bombs, sandbags, more than a thousand picks

<sup>22</sup> Brig.-Gen. the Hon. L. J. P. Butler, C.M.G., D.S.O., p.s.c. G.S.O. (2), 4th Div., 1915; commanded 60th Inf. Bde., 1916/17, and 4th Guards Bde., 1918. Officer of British Regular Army; of Tiverton, Devon, Eng.; b. London, 22 April, 1876.

and shovels, and a large quantity of engineering stores for use in the captured trenches had to be carried on waggons to the rearward dumps, and thence by hand to the trenches. Of the five communication trenches, which were apportioned between the brigades, that of the 14th, "Brompton Road," was found by Colonel Pope to be full of water for three-quarters of its length.<sup>23</sup> By intense effort, eventually working through the whole night of July 16th, the 14th Field Company (which itself was to participate in the following day's attack) succeeded in laying a dry duckboard-path through the whole trench. Farther south the 5th Pioneer Battalion laid a tramway to the front line, in order to facilitate the carrying up of stores. The artillery of the 4th Division (which upon being relieved had been immediately ordered back for attachment, in improvised emplacements, to the artillery-groups of the 5th) was mostly—but not entirely—in position by dawn on the 17th, and ready to begin registering its guns on the enemy's wire and parapets. The 57,000 rounds required for the 18-pounder field-guns had been placed in position.<sup>24</sup> The five trench-mortar batteries—three British and two Canadian under the command of Major Sir John Keane<sup>25</sup>—had arrived and occupied the positions



<sup>23</sup> The engineers of the 1st Australian Division, after commencing to improve it, had abandoned the attempt in consequence of the difficulty of freeing it from water.

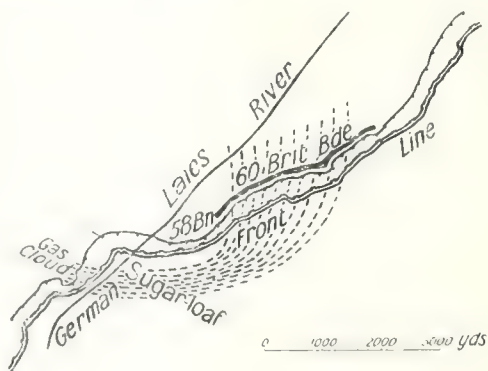
<sup>24</sup> This represents roughly the 5th Australian Division's share of the 200,000 rounds allotted to Haking for the operation. The 5th Division had also 13,000 which, it was understood, were not to be used.

<sup>25</sup> Lieut.-Col. Sir John Keane, Bt., D.S.O.; R.A. Senator of Irish Free State since 1922; of Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, Ireland; b. Dublin, 3 June, 1873.

hastily prepared for them; but some of these were too far from the enemy's trench, and not all the trench-mortar bombs had yet reached the front area. The repairs to communication trenches were not yet finished, nor were the dumps of ammunition and grenades for the infantry complete. Finally, the troops themselves were so worn out after the last tiresome night-long approach through congested communication trenches<sup>26</sup> that upon reaching the front line many dropped down and were immediately fast asleep. Nevertheless, parties had to be at once sent out to reconnoitre the enemy's wire, and also to clear a passage through their own.

The strain on part of the force had been increased by the fact that the first night of the relief had been a disturbed one. First, about 9 p.m. the 61st Division discharged a gas-cloud, which not only called forth a sharp enemy bombardment, but, floating over the salient, drifted back into the British line opposite its northern face, causing casualties in the incoming 60th British Brigade. Second, the German retaliatory bombardment appeared, about 9.15 p.m., to shift to a point near the left of the intended front of attack, where the 58th Australian Battalion was about to be relieved by the 6th Oxfordshire. For two hours the sector about Mine and Cellar Farm Avenues was furiously shelled, both those communication trenches and the front-line defences being in parts levelled.

This outburst had, as a matter of fact, nothing to do with the gas attack, but was the bombardment for a German raid, which had been in preparation before the 5th Division, or probably even the 4th, entered the line.<sup>27</sup> During the uproar Germans—reported to be ten in number—were observed crossing No-Man's Land; a



<sup>26</sup> For example, it took the 31st Battalion from 9 p.m. until 5 a.m. to move from its billets in Fleurbaix to its allotted sector.

<sup>27</sup> It was called the "Kulmbach" enterprise, and was led by Lieut. Härder.



bomb-fight occurred in the trenches of the 58th, and three members of an Australian Lewis-gun team with their gun were afterwards found to have been captured. As usual, the thoroughness of the bombardment caused heavy loss in the thickly-garrisoned front area (5th Division—42 killed, 118 wounded, 4 missing; 6th Oxfordshire—10 killed, 19 wounded).

From German sources it is now known that the raiding party (2 officers and about 95 non-commissioned officers and men of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R.) encountered a series of mishaps, due to the short shooting of their own guns, the sudden gas-attack, the explosion of one of their own trench-mortar bombs, and the "tough resistance"<sup>28</sup> of their opponents, which combined to cause what their historian calls "heavy loss"—10 killed, 22 wounded. From the prisoners, according to the German records, it was gathered that the 5th Australian Division "has occupied the 1st Australian Division's position . . . for the last three days." The enemy learned nothing of the 4th Division's having been there, nor indeed of its presence in France, and received no indication whatever of an intended attack.

It was on the following day, July 16th, that the bombardment—registration and wire-cutting—by the artillery, which then began seriously, first suggested to the staff of the German division holding the sector that an operation of some importance might be imminent. The raids, it was recognised, had been merely demonstrations designed to divert attention from the Somme, and, although German suspicions had previously been aroused by the digging of what were called the "Australian" saps in No-Man's Land,<sup>29</sup> work on them had ceased since the beginning of July. On the 16th, however, the increase in the artillery-fire was obvious. The artillery commander of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division observed that a group of light batteries had that day been emplaced in forward positions behind the British lines, and next day another group. It was also noted that on the 16th the bombardment was chiefly wire-cutting south of the Sugar-loaf, which led the divisional intelligence officer to report to Sixth German Army Headquarters that a small infantry enterprise was expected in that sector. In the German front line, however, the impression at first existed that the bombardment was merely retaliation for the previous night's raid.<sup>30</sup>

At this stage the attitude of the British G.H.Q. towards the projected offensive underwent a remarkable change. It is evident from the records that Haig's staff, far from pressing for the demonstration to be made, regarded its

<sup>28</sup> *History of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R.*, p. 49.

<sup>29</sup> These were the saps dug by the 1st Pioneers (see p. 274). The report of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division on the Battle of Fromelles, after referring to this work and to the increased activity in June, says: "All this was, however, merely demonstration, and found sufficient explanation in the big Franco-British offensive which began on July 1." The raids which followed in July "could not be regarded otherwise than as demonstrations to keep us occupied. Any signs denoting an enemy attack on even a moderate frontage were completely wanting. The 'Australier Stellung' had not been worked upon for some weeks."

<sup>30</sup> *History of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R.*, p. 49.

probable results with deep misgivings, and it seems certain that some members of the staff would gladly have seen the orders cancelled. The "purely artillery" demonstration, which some of the staff had favoured, was a very different affair from the projected infantry attack now ordered. It is true that the general on the spot, Haking, was confident of the success of his plan, but the staff must have been acutely conscious of the fact that, three weeks before, Haking had launched a strikingly similar operation on a smaller scale with disastrous results.<sup>31</sup> The local attacks made in the same area and for much the same purpose in May and September, 1915,<sup>32</sup> had signally failed. Whether the doubts of Generals Birdwood and White, who were in daily contact with G.H.Q. and made no secret of their adverse opinion,<sup>33</sup> helped to foster this hesitation can only be conjectured. It is, however, almost certain that it was greatly increased as the result of a visit paid by one of Haig's staff, Major Howard, on July 14th to the scene of the proposed attack. Howard laid before the chiefs-of-staff of the First and Second Armies a summary of the arrangements made by themselves with General Butler on the previous day,<sup>34</sup> and obtained an expression of their concurrence; but he himself, after visiting the front line with the Australian Brigadier-General Elliott and inspecting from a point in No-Man's Land the flat sweep of meadow—400 yards wide—across which the troops must advance to attack the Sugar-loaf, and after considering the artillery and ammunition available, formed the opinion that the attack could hardly fail to end in disaster. Having fulfilled his mission—to ascertain whether all staffs were in agreement—he reported the

<sup>31</sup> This assault, suggested by Haking in the same document which contained his original proposal for the larger operation, had been delivered on June 29 by the 116th Brigade of the 39th Division. The intention was to attack, cut off, and permanently hold the "Boar's Head Salient," two and a quarter miles south-west of the Sugar-loaf Salient. The right battalion reached and held for a time the enemy's support line; the left penetrated the enemy's trench at only a few points. All were subsequently forced to withdraw with heavy loss. Major the Hon. Neville Lytton, who was present, concluding an account, naturally coloured by the feelings of a participant, says (*The Press and the General Staff*, p. 42): "The Divisional general was ungummed, but it seemed to us that there were others who were responsible, and, if they had lost their commands after this failure, possibly greater disasters might have been avoided, for a similar experiment was made a little later on with two divisions and the result was exactly the same. Naturally in the Communique our attack appeared as a successful raid. . . ."

<sup>32</sup> See p. 109.

<sup>33</sup> See p. 443.

<sup>34</sup> See p. 333.

arrangements to G.H.Q. But it may be presumed that his grave fears were also at least verbally represented, for Sir Douglas Haig, before whom the report was laid, noted at its foot:

Approved, except that infantry should not be sent in unless *an adequate* supply of guns and ammunition for counter-battery work is provided. This depends partly on what guns enemy shows.

D.H.

15 July '16.

On July 16th, the eve of the date then fixed for the assault, General Butler himself revisited Chocques and, at a conference with the two army commanders and their chiefs-of-staff, pointed out that Haig did not wish the infantry to attack at all unless the commanders were satisfied that they had sufficient artillery and ammunition not only to capture, but to hold and consolidate, the enemy's trenches. He also discussed the other resources and added that the information at present in possession of G.H.Q. concerning the transfer of German reserves "did not impose the necessity for the attack to take place to-morrow, 17th, as originally arranged."

These doubts were answered by General Haking. A report of the conference states that he

was most emphatic that he was quite satisfied with the resources at his disposal; he was quite confident of the success of the operation, and considered that the ammunition at his disposal was ample to put the infantry in and keep them there.

Monro, after conversation with the others, gave the assurance that he was satisfied the attack could take place. The other point raised by G.H.Q. was then put forward: the operation was now not urgent; had it not better be postponed or cancelled and perhaps undertaken later "if the necessity arose"? All the commanders present, however, were unanimously against a postponement. They said that the troops were worked up to it, were ready and anxious to do it, and they considered that any cancellation or change of plan would have a bad effect on the troops now.

General Haking, it is recorded, was most emphatic on this point. General Monro and he jointly gave their assurance that, unless it was to the advantage of the main

battle that this operation should *not* take place, they considered the orders should hold good. On the matter being put in this way, the envoy from G.H.Q. agreed that there was nothing in the general situation to prevent the operation taking place.

Thus, at the urgent wish of the local generals, the plan of this attack was allowed to stand. But when Haking asked whether, in the event of great success, he might push on to Aubers Ridge, the answer given on behalf of Haig was "No"; the objective was to be a strictly limited one, and the Commander-in-Chief did not intend to embark in more extended operations, "however inviting."

Nor did General Butler's caution cease at that stage. In the afternoon heavy rain fell, and he accordingly returned to Chocques to ascertain what effect this would have on the artillery preparation. He did not see Monro, but impressed upon his staff that, "if the weather, or any other cause, rendered a postponement desirable, it was to be clearly understood that it was in the power of the Army Commander to postpone or cancel the operation at his discretion." Haig was informed of all his actions, and approved.

Haking, before he gave his assurance at the conference, had discovered, to his disappointment, that some of the heavy batteries sent to him were newly-arrived units which had never before fired in France. He still maintained, however, that the preparation by his guns would be adequate, hoping (as he afterwards explained) that he would have the afternoon of July 16th and the morning of the 17th "to get them accurately registered, and to have some practice before the main operation commenced." But the afternoon of the 16th proved so rainy that the "heavies" were unable to register; and at 4 a.m. on the 17th, the time when the final seven-hours' bombardment should have started, a heavy mist lay upon the country. The hour was accordingly put off, first until 8, and then till 11. At 9 a.m., as the air was still too misty, Haking wrote to the First Army commander advising with great reluctance that the operation should be postponed. He added:

The infantry and field artillery, who are to carry out the attack, are not fully trained, and G.H.Q., from what was said at your



conference yesterday, do not appear to be very anxious for the attack to be delivered. . . . I should be glad to know if you wish me to carry it out tomorrow on the same programme. It is important, with these new troops, that this information should be given to me as early as possible, so that I can issue such instructions as will minimise any loss of moral owing to postponement.

As a matter of fact the news, as it gradually filtered down parts of the line, where the weary infantry was waiting for the offensive to commence, was received with intense relief by both divisions, whose men were well-nigh worn out with the hurried preparation. The army commander decided that the assault should not be undertaken for at least two days. This lucky postponement made it possible to give some rest to the assault-battalions, one of which in each brigade was sent back from the front line to villages in the rear area, and part of the other to the reserve lines. Refreshment was thus given to the abounding spirit of the Australian infantry, who, though realising their rawness, and somewhat bewildered by the extreme haste of preparation, which many suspected of being unsound, nevertheless welcomed the chance of getting at their chief enemy. In the 15th (Victoria) Brigade General Elliott changed his assault-battalions, relieving the 58th—which had suffered heavily in the German raid—and 57th by the 59th and 60th. The other brigadiers made no such change. The artillery proceeded with registration and with the cutting of the German wire, which was now examined each night by patrols; the dumps at the front line were completed; the trench-mortars received all their bombs; and the portion of the assault-battalions still holding the front line had a day or two in which to grow acquainted with trench-life and with the region of the attack. All were to be allowed good meals, and, if possible, a sleep immediately before the assault—if the assault, as expected, took place.

Monro, however, in agreeing to the postponement, had decided to cancel the whole operation. In an urgent despatch he informed Haig of this decision, and asked for leave to inform Plumer. In answer, he received the following:

The Commander-in-Chief wishes the special operation mentioned in the above letter (*i.e.*, Monro's despatch) to be carried out as soon

as possible, weather permitting, provided always that General Sir Charles Monro is satisfied that the conditions are favourable, and that the resources at his disposal, including ammunition, are adequate both for the preparation and execution of the enterprise.

The reason for this decision does not appear in the available records, but it may be inferred that the most recent intelligence of German movements showed that a holding attack was again required. It is known that Haig was then apprehensive of a German counter-attack on the Somme—it actually fell next day. The form of his telegram was obviously determined by his principle of standing to a decision already given. As Monro had already given his opinion that the resources were sufficient, it was a foregone conclusion that the operation would now take place. Suggested first by Haking as a feint-attack; then by Plumer as part of a victorious advance; rejected by Monro in favour of attack elsewhere; put forward again by G.H.Q. as a “purely artillery” demonstration; ordered as a demonstration but with an infantry operation added, according to Haking’s plan and through his emphatic advocacy; almost cancelled—through weather and the doubts of G.H.Q.—and finally reinstated by Haig, apparently as an urgent demonstration—such were the changes of form through which the plans of this ill-fated operation had successively passed. It was now definitely ordered. Haking arranged that the seven-hours’ bombardment should be begun at 11 o’clock in the morning of Wednesday, July 19th, and the infantry attack at 6 p.m. Thus the assault, originally planned to be delivered before noon, was now to be made three hours before dusk.

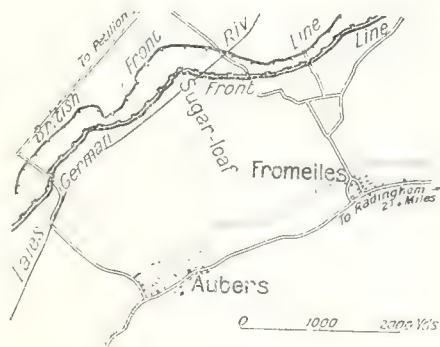
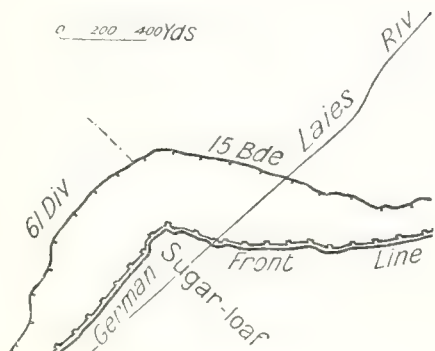
The weather continuing fine, this time-table was adhered to, the heavy guns continuing until late in the morning of the 19th their endeavours to register on the enemy’s line. The enemy’s front-line defences were situated on the lowlands drained by the “River” Laies, whose straight ditch-like course, running close behind the south-western face of his Sugar-loaf system, emerged from its north-western face into No-Man’s Land.<sup>35</sup> There, crossing obliquely the front of the 15th Australian Brigade, it entered the British trenches at that brigade’s left flank. Probably through blockages

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<sup>35</sup> See Vol. XII, *placé* 191.

of this stream in No-Man's Land, the German front system and communications had been flooded much more generally than the British; but the trouble had been largely overcome by the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division, which, through the installation of electrical pumps and construction of dugouts, had made parts of the line dry and comfortable even in winter. The area also differed from that of the British in the presence, a mile behind the front line and parallel to it, of a low but abrupt ridge, along which, connected by a main road to Lille, lay the villages of Aubers, Fromelles, and Radinghem,

and a strong rear system of defence. On this ridge were numerous observation posts overlooking the flats, and also the battle-headquarters of the regiments holding the line, corresponding roughly to the advanced-headquarters of the Australian and British brigadiers.



The German division holding the sector had been, like twelve other reserve divisions, raised immediately after the outbreak of war from untrained men under or over military age, with a proportion of fully trained but elderly reservists. Like the 50th (Prussian) Reserve Division, now on its northern flank, the 6th Bavarian had originally formed part of the hurriedly-raised force with which the Germans had attempted to break through the British in the First Battle of Ypres; from that sector it had been sent, in March, 1915, to its present front. It comprised two brigades—the 12th and 14th Bavarian Reserve—each of two regiments, each regiment having three battalions. The regiments held the front from the north southwards in the following order:—

Opposite Boutillerie-Cordonnerie: 20th Bavarian R.I.R.

Opposite Cordonnerie-Petillon: 21st Bavarian R.I.R.

Opposite Petillon-Tilleloy (*i.e.*, the Sugar-loaf): 16th Bavarian R.I.R.

Opposite Tilleloy-Fauquissart: 17th Bavarian R.I.R.

Each regiment appears to have had one battalion in the front-line system; half of a second in a series of detached posts 800 yards in rear, with a few platoons in advanced strong-posts, such as Ferme Delangré; the remaining half partly in the second defence-line on Fromelles Ridge, and partly in billets as regimental reserve; the third battalion as brigade or divisional reserve in villages some three miles back. The second battalion supplied carrying and working parties for the trenches and tramways. The divisional front was covered directly by eighty or ninety guns, of which about a quarter were heavies.



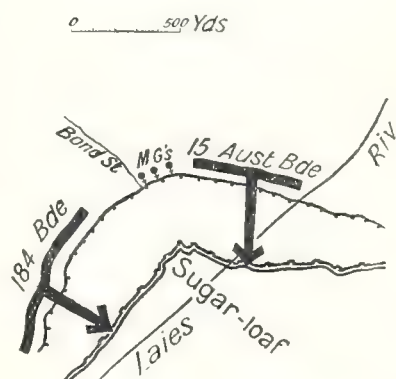
These dispositions of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division were well known to the British XI Corps Intelligence. Those of the 5th Australian and 61st Divisions (from north to south) were:—

		Reserve Battalions.		Assaulting Battalions.	German.
		"Fourth" Battalion.	"Third" Battalion.		
5th Australian Division	8th (Mixed) Brigade	29th	30th	32nd (W.Aust.) 31st (Q'land and Vic.)	21st Bav. R.I.R.
	14th (N.S.W.) Brigade	56th	55th	54th	
	15th (Vic.) Brigade	57th	58th	53rd 60th 59th	
	184th Brigade	one battalion	4th Oxfords	2/1st Bucks. 2/4th Royal Berks.	
61st Division	183rd Brigade	one battalion	one battalion	2/4th Glos. 2/6th Glos.	16th Bav R.I.R.
	182nd Brigade	one battalion	one battalion	2/6th Warwicks 2/7th Warwicks	

The actual Sugar-loaf was held by the 16th Bavarian R.I.R., and the capture of that angle, including its northern



face as far as the opening of the Laies River, was part of the duty of the 184th Brigade, which had its left flank on the old army-boundary at "Bond Street." The Australian attack was to be southwards, and consequently the attacking lines of the 184th British and 15th Australian Brigades would at first be separated by a gap of 300 yards, which, however, would be gradually closed as they advanced. In this gap were stationed, on the Australian parapet, four machine-guns of the 15th Brigade and five Lewis guns of the 58th Battalion with the duty of sweeping the parapet of the Sugar-loaf until the advancing lines gradually masked their fire. Of the Australian assaulting battalions, the 60th had not yet been in the front line on the Western Front; the 32nd and 54th had been there for part of a day, and the 59th somewhat longer; the 31st and 53rd for two days. The 14th and 15th Brigades, however,



contained about twenty-five per cent. of well-seasoned men from the old 1st and 2nd Brigades, and the majority of their officers and N.C.O.'s had fought at Anzac. The 8th, on the other hand, though long and carefully trained, was entirely new to fighting. The two battalions, however, with which Brigadier-General Tivey<sup>36</sup> intended to launch his assault were composed of his older and most hardened men: the 32nd, containing many Western and South Australian miners and farmers, occupied the most difficult position, on the left of the whole attack, the 31st, partly composed of Queensland miners and bush workers, being next to it.<sup>37</sup>

The effect of the artillery in cutting the enemy's wire was reported by the patrols, which crossed No-Man's Land

<sup>36</sup> Maj.-Gen. E. Tivey, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 8th Inf. Bde., 1915/18; 5th Aust. Div., 1918/19. Stockbroker; of Toorak, Vic.; b. Inglewood, Vic., 19 Sept., 1866.

<sup>37</sup> Gen. Tivey's choice of his assaulting battalions was partly determined by these considerations, and partly by the fact that the 29th (Victoria) and 30th (N.S.W.) Battalions had been sent first into the line and the 31st and 32nd were due for the next task.

during the night of July 18th, to be as follows: opposite the left Australian brigade (8th)—cut in places; opposite the centre (14th)—judged to be intact. Patrols of the right brigade (15th) could not approach the wire, as the enemy in the Sugar-loaf had scouts or sentries stationed eighty yards in front of his line. The morning of the 19th was bright, and, after more registration by the heavies, the bombardment commenced at 11 o'clock, the programme being:

- 11-11.30 a.m.    Registration by divisional artilleries and trench-mortars.
- 11.30-1 p.m.     Registration and bombardment by 9.2-inch and 12-inch howitzers, and registration by 6-inch howitzers.
- 1-3 p.m.        .. Wire-cutting by 18-pounders.
- 3-6 p.m.        .. Wire-cutting by 18 pounders and medium trench-mortars. Bombardment by 18-pounders, 4.5-inch howitzers, 6-inch howitzers, and (from 4 p.m. onwards) by 9.2-inch and 12-inch howitzers.
- 6 p.m.          .. Artillery to lift to "barrage lines" (that is, to lengthen range, the field-guns placing a curtain of fire about a hundred yards or more beyond the objective, and the howitzers bombarding communication trenches, cross-roads, and villages farther back).

By an alteration of the original plan, the artillery of the 61st Division, though lifting from the enemy's front line at 6 o'clock, was to continue firing on his support trench until 6.5, so that the infantry would be better covered. Brigadier-General Christian, temporarily commanding 4th and 5th Australian Divisional Artilleries, decided that, in consequence of their inexperience, it would be unwise to make the change in their case, and they were therefore at 6 p.m. to lift straight to their "barrage lines."

It will be seen that the bombardment was mainly registration until 1 p.m., the field-artillery then beginning to cut wire and practically all guns bombarding from 3 o'clock onwards. As the day went on the infantry in the front trenches could see with delight that havoc was being wrought in parts of the German breastwork, especially by the trench-mortars. Ragged gaps began to be apparent. Yet artillery observers noted with some anxiety that in the actual apex of the Sugar-loaf the enemy's defences did not appear to have been greatly injured, and that certain parts of his entanglement, especially opposite the 15th Brigade, had not been cut. Accordingly Haking's artillery commander, at 2.35, ordered

more rounds to be fired at the Sugar-loaf; but the message reporting intact wire west of the Laies was received only at 5.10 p.m., too late for remedy.<sup>38</sup>

During the day the Australian assault-battalions concentrated at the starting positions, the three from billets commencing their march early in the afternoon. Each man carried, besides his rifle-ammunition and rations, two bombs and also two empty sand-bags for use in constructing new defences. In some units only the companies which would form the first two lines had been provided with steel helmets, those in the third and fourth waves wearing their felt hats.<sup>39</sup> By 2 o'clock the battalions from billets were reaching the "300 yards" line, and some of the companies allotted for the first two waves were continuing on through the communication trenches to the front line, in almost exact accordance with the time-table. At this juncture the enemy's artillery, which till then had replied only slightly, began to answer the increasing British bombardment by shelling the communication trenches and reserve and support lines of both the attacking divisions. In the Australian area the ammunition- and bomb-dump of the 31st Battalion was blown up,<sup>40</sup> and the battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Toll,<sup>41</sup> and most of his signallers, messengers, and the medical staff of the battalion were wounded. Mine and Pinney's Avenues, main approaches for the two flank-brigades, were blown in at points near the firing line, but Cellar Farm and V.C. Avenues, nearer the outer flanks, were shelled chiefly with shrapnel, and the four waves of each brigade assembled in the front and reserve lines without serious loss. The 15th Brigade reported them in position at 3.25, the 14th at 3.45, and the 8th at 4 o'clock. In the meantime, probably in answer to the bombardment at 3 o'clock, the enemy's fire upon both these trench-lines sharply increased. An unspoken

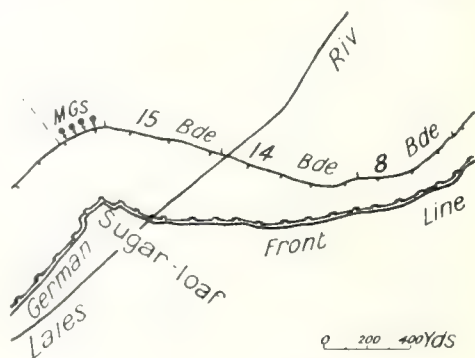
<sup>38</sup> Across the message (in possession of the Australian War Memorial Library) is a note by the staff of the 15th Brigade—"Told R.A. (Artillery). Too late."

<sup>39</sup> This was the only occasion on which the Australian felt hat was largely used in action on the Western Front. Some of these hats, picked up years afterwards in front of the Sugar-loaf, are now in the Australian War Memorial.

<sup>40</sup> The bombers saved half of this dump by dashing in and throwing out burning boxes.

<sup>41</sup> Lieut.-Col. F. W. Toll, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 3rd Bn., A.N. & M.E.F. (New Guinea), 1914/15; 31st Bn., A.I.F., 1915/18. Company manager; of Mount Molloy, Q'land; b. Bowen, Q'land, 18 Jan., 1872.

suspicion suggested itself to most men and officers that the Germans—whether through spies, or by detecting the Australian movements—“knew something.” The same shell-fire was falling on the 61st Division, where the forward battery-positions also were heavily shelled. It is now known that the enemy, by ordinary observation, anticipated the operation. On July 17th the increased bombardment by the Australian artillery caused him to expect a minor attack on that front as well as on the 61st Division's. On the 18th he had further observed parties of men carrying forward boxes, assumed to be of hand-grenades, and rolls of material, apparently mats to facilitate the passage of troops over wire-entanglements. A warning had accordingly been sent to the two reserve battalions of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division, and fatigue parties had been detailed to carry bombs to the German front line. At 7.15 a.m. on July 19th the divisional commander, General von Schleinitz, ordered a battalion of his reserve—the 1/20th Bavarian R.I.R.—to move up to Fournes, three miles from the line, for use, if required, by his 14th Brigade facing the 5th Australian Division. At 1 o'clock the sudden increase in the British bombardment being noted, the garrisons of the second line were ordered to stand to arms. According to the Bavarian narrative,<sup>42</sup> an answering bombardment was laid by the German artillery upon their opponent's force in its assault trenches. At 3.15 troops—probably some of the 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company who were trying to create a “pipe-pusher” sap<sup>43</sup>—were observed in the saps in No-Man's Land opposite the Sugar-loaf, and fire was directed upon that area. But in the Australian lines it was upon the left wing, held by the 8th and part of the 14th Brigades, that the bombardment



<sup>42</sup> *Die Bayern im Grossen Kriege, 1914-1919*, p. 290.

<sup>43</sup> See note on p. 361. (A photograph of such a sap is given in *Vol. XII*, plate 330, where it is wrongly called a “Russian” sap.)



fell most heavily. Moreover on that flank, where No-Man's Land was narrow, the Australians were now suffering severely through the falling among them of an increasing number of their own shells. Even during the morning the 8th Brigade had been hit by such stray shots, one of which shattered a party of the 8th Field Company engaged in cutting a sally-port through their own parapet. Some of the guns were undoubtedly firing erratically, and, with artillery so new to its work, the error could not readily be traced or prevented. The defect was the direct outcome of the rapidity with which this artillery had been raised in Egypt.<sup>44</sup> In the 8th Brigade the casualties through the fire of both artilleries became dangerously heavy; the German cannonade at certain times swelled to "barrage" fire in response to Haking's ruse<sup>45</sup> of lifting the bombardment and then bringing it down heavily again. Although the enemy's infantry does not appear to have been affected, some of his artillery groups were deceived into thinking that the attack was being launched, and laid down a curtain of fire against it. During the last of these outbursts, at 5.25, one company commander of the 54th Battalion, Captain Taylor,<sup>46</sup> had his arm blown off by a shell.<sup>47</sup> Towards 5 o'clock the German artillery had eased somewhat; but at 5.25 there duly began in the British and Australian lines a series of movements immediately preceding the assault. In the Australian area the 14th Brigade, having inadequate communication trenches, sent its third and fourth waves at 5.25 and 5.31 over the open fields between the "300 yards" and front lines. At the same time,<sup>48</sup> the infantry of the 61st Division began to file out from its front trenches through sally-ports leading into No-Man's Land.

It was with this manœuvre that the infantry operation really began. The sun of a bright summer afternoon was

<sup>44</sup> Premature bursts, due to unskilled work in the new shell-factories of Great Britain or those of America, also caused a few casualties in the artillery.

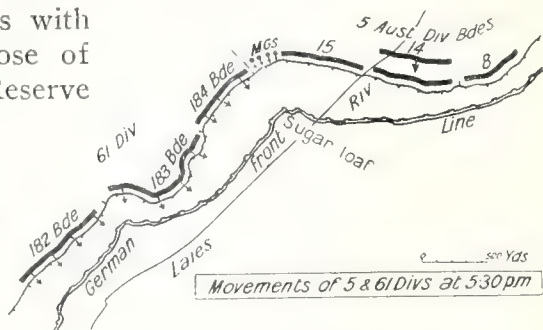
<sup>45</sup> See p. 339. Carried out at 3.25, 4.4, 4.29, and 5.21 p.m.

<sup>46</sup> Capt. H. Taylor; 54th Bn. Clerk; of Newcastle, N.S.W.; b. Goulburn, N.S.W., 23 Sept., 1891. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>47</sup> Capt. C. B. Hopkins (of Warrnambool, Vic.), a young Duntroon graduate, who had given up the position of Staff Captain, 14th Brigade, for the command of the 14th Light Trench Mortar Battery, also was killed about this time.

<sup>48</sup> At 5.30.

still fairly high, and the enemy, observing the movements which were obviously the commencement of the attack, opened heavily upon the front and reserve lines with all available guns—those of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division being supported for the occasion by the flanking batteries of the 50th (Reserve) and 54th Divisions to the north and south respectively.



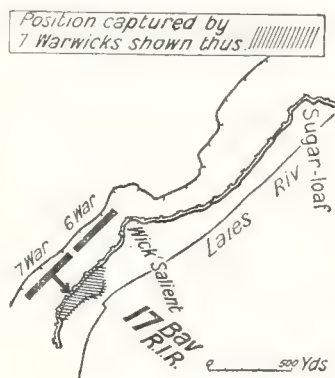
The history of the Bavarian army states:<sup>49</sup> "The backbone of the assault—when it finally left the trenches at 5.30 p.m. (*sic*)—was thus broken." The waves of the 14th Brigade, however, arrived without heavy loss at their own front line. There, it is true, casualties became dangerously high—especially in the untried 8th Brigade. For the first time in the war an Australian attacking force was actually meeting the contingency most dreaded by commanders: its intentions had been discovered, and the enemy barrage was crashing upon its assembly position with the object of destroying the attack. "The first thing that struck you," an N.C.O. of the 14th Brigade afterwards said, "was that shells were bursting everywhere, mostly high-explosive; and you could see machine-guns knocking bits off the trees in front of the reserve line and sparking against the wire. . . . When men looked over the top they saw No-Man's Land leaping up everywhere in showers of dust and sand . . . rather confirming our fears that the Germans knew something." But the enemy's available artillery, totalling 73 light and 29 heavy pieces, was not sufficient in such circumstances to break two divisions. At this juncture the British bombardment also was greatly increased; the other side of No-Man's Land was barely discernible through the dust and smoke.<sup>50</sup> But here and

<sup>49</sup> *Die Bayern im Grossen Kriege*, p. 290.

<sup>50</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 193.

there, taking a hurried glance over the parapet, men drew comfort from the sight of the German breastwork "going up" in shreds. When at 5.43 the first of the Australians moved boldly over the top, the fighting spirit of most of them, including the 8th Brigade, in spite of harsh losses, had not been seriously affected.

The 61st Division was in a less fortunate position. The strength of its battalions was only 600, and, although it had carried out a number of successful raids, and possessed an artillery more experienced than that supporting its neighbour, its infantry was still inexperienced and of much slighter physique than the Australian. Its staff had ordered that, instead of moving over the parapet, the infantry should emerge into No-Man's Land through a large number of narrow sally-ports.<sup>51</sup> On the extreme right, where the enemy trenches had been so utterly destroyed by the bombardment that the British could afterwards find no shelter in them, this method succeeded, most of the 182nd Brigade emerging practically unobserved. Hardly a shot was fired at it, and the right battalion—2/7th Warwickshire—easily captured the opposing trenches. In front of the left battalion, the 2/6th Warwickshire, lay an angle of the German lines known as the "Wick Salient." Here the 11th Company, 17th Bavarian R.I.R., quickly aroused by its commander, Lieutenant Reichenhardt, left its shelters and carrying three machine-guns, raced the 2/6th Warwicks for the breastwork, which it succeeded in reaching when the British line was but fifty yards distant. The Warwicks were thus (according to their own account, which exactly agrees with the enemy's)<sup>52</sup> "faced at the last moment with

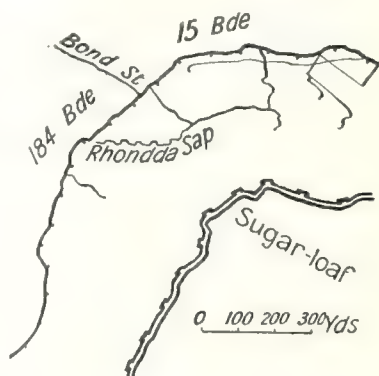


<sup>51</sup> Australian commanders were opposed to this, some of them remembering the difficulties of the 6th Battalion attacking German Officers' Trench in Gallipoli on 6 August, 1915 (see Vol. II, pp. 599-605).

<sup>52</sup> From the report of the 61st Division. See also *History of the 17th Bavarian R.I.R.*, p. 48.

machine-guns handled with great bravery from the top of the parapet," and were repulsed with a loss of 9 officers and 220 men.

The 183rd and 184th Brigades had each, before beginning to deploy, suffered under the German bombardment. The 183rd had therefore reinforced its line; but, at 5.30, immediately it commenced to file out into No-Man's Land, it had been observed by the enemy and brought under heavy machine-gun fire. Both of its assault battalions, the 2/4th and 2/6th Gloucestershire, had thus lost heavily; part of them appears to have been late in making the subsequent advance, and, the German machine-guns again opening, the enemy's breastwork was reached only at one point, north of the Wick, by a few of the 2/6th Gloucestershire. The 184th Brigade, which formed the right-centre of the attack and was to seize the Sugar-loaf, was heavily shelled just before deployment, losing 140 men. Its two battalions were hurriedly reorganised, and at 5.40 began to file out of their sally-ports. The 2/4th Royal Berkshire on the right were at once seen and shattered by German machine-guns, their commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Beer,<sup>53</sup> being killed while directing his men out. In front of the 2/1st Buckinghamshire, however, near the apex of the Sugar-loaf, there extended into No-Man's Land a long trench, "Rhondda Sap." This had been dug long before with the intention of meeting similar saps which, ever since Haking in June suggested the assault, the Australian pioneers had been digging from their side, so as partly to bridge the re-entrant.<sup>54</sup> These works had not yet been finished; but, making use of the Rhondda Sap, the 2/1st Buckinghamshire managed, under machine-gun fire, but without heavy loss, to creep out



<sup>53</sup> Lieut.-Col. J. H. Beer. Commanded 2/4th Royal Berks. Regt., 1916. Farmer; of Kenton, Devon, Eng.; b. Kenton, 6 Sept., 1879. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>54</sup> See pp. 135, 275-6.



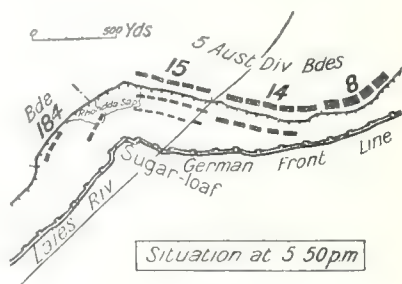
into position not far from the Sugar-loaf.<sup>55</sup> Upon assaulting, the centre and right of the 184th Brigade—comprising the right company of the Buckinghamshire and the survivors of the Royal Berkshire—were at once stopped by the Sugar-loaf machine-guns, which, as was already evident, had not been destroyed, nor even wholly silenced, during the British bombardment. On the left, however, Captain Church,<sup>56</sup> leading his company, was killed as he reached the German breastwork, and, according to some accounts, a small section of the western face of the Sugar-loaf was entered, if not captured. The staff of the 61st Division was very soon aware of the success of the division's right, and the failure of the centre. But as to the assault on the Sugar-loaf, reports of artillery observers seemed contradictory—at 6.23 it was stated that the 184th Brigade was "in"; but afterwards, "Germans holding parapet strongly all along. No sign of our people." Further news could not yet be obtained, since all forward telephone lines had been cut by the enemy's bombardment, and from that part of the attack no messengers returned.

The fate of the 15th Australian Brigade's assault on the northern front, next to the flank of the 184th, was equally difficult to ascertain. Differently from those of the 61st Division, the Australian waves left their trenches by moving over the parapet, all ready deployed. As No-Man's Land varied in width, the several units moved out at different times, the hour being fixed by the battalion commanders.

<sup>55</sup> Here, and at two other points much farther south, the 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company, which worked in Haking's area, had been ordered to prepare to break the surface of No-Man's Land by thrusting forward from Rhondda Sap, beneath the surface, a pipe filled with explosive. The enemy had at 3 o'clock observed troops, opposite the Sugar-loaf, in the forward saps known to him as the "Australian Trench," and had turned his bombardment upon them, thus cutting the electric leads to two of the pipes. The commander of the 3rd Tunnelling Company, Major L. J. Coulter (of Grenville, Vic.), and six of his men were wounded in attempting to fire them. The second-in-command, Captain A. Sanderson (of Perth, W. Aust.), however, with Private L. A. Street (of New Town, Tas.), repaired the wires and fired the charges in the one case; and Lieutenant O. R. Howie (of Collie, W. Aust.), assisted by Sergeant M. J. M. Kerby (of Ballarat, Vic.) and Lance-Corporal W. A. McKay (of Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.), under equal difficulties, fired the other. The third was blown by Lieutenant B. Priestman (of Western Australia), assisted by Corporal W. A. Bayes (of Queenstown, Tas.), and Lance-Corporal E. E. Jackson (of Underwood, Tas.). The craters thus formed—long straight ditches, five or six feet in depth—provided ready-made communication trenches part of the way across No-Man's Land, and proved useful during the subsequent collection of the wounded. A similar pipe had been blown by the 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company on the occasion of General Haking's previous attack upon the Boar's Head Salient.

<sup>56</sup> Capt. H. Church; 2/1st Bucks. Regt. Barrister-at-law; of Chesham, Bucks., Eng.; b. London, 24 March, 1883. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

Thus, near the Sugar-loaf, where No-Man's Land was wide, the 59th and 60th Battalions went over the parapet at 5.45; the 53rd is stated to have crossed it at 5.43; the 54th at 5.50; the 31st and 32nd at 5.53. So, when the first wave of the 15th Brigade went out at 5.45, the artillery would for another quarter of an hour be pouring its full bombardment upon the enemy's front trench-system. If things were working out as planned, the German machine-guns should be out of action and the garrison of



the Sugar-loaf penned by shrapnel in its dugouts, so that the advancing waves could cross No-Man's Land without interference. General Elliott, who, characteristically, had been among his men in the front line genuinely relishing the danger, had been impressed by the bombardment laid down by the field-artillery. "Boys," he had said, "you won't find a German in the trenches when you get there." Yet from the moment the waves of the 15th Brigade crossed their own parapet, all ordinary methods of military communication appeared to fail, and there descended upon those waiting at its headquarters that complete absence of news which was one of the normal conditions of modern battle. Elliott was then at "Trou Post," only a few hundred yards in rear, and, like all others in the Australian lines, was listening anxiously for the first sound from the enemy's garrison. At 5.50, over the roar of the artillery, was detected a feeble musketry. At 5.55 a machine-gun was heard firing from the direction of the Sugar-loaf. It was evident that the enemy was standing to some of his guns in spite of the bombardment. Successive waves of the 15th Brigade were leaving the parapet at five-minutes' intervals, and German shrapnel was now descending sharply on Elliott's front and reserve trenches. At 6.2, immediately after the artillery lifted its fire, the sound of musketry was increased. Observing officers of the artillery reported occasional glimpses of the 59th and 60th advancing across the flats: at 6.9 they could

be seen, still short of the German trench. By 6.15 the musketry had died down and, judging from this and other subsequent signs that the Germans had been driven from their trenches, Elliott reported at 6.30 that the attack appeared successful. Yet no definite word came back. At 6.34 and 6.40 the observer of the 114th Battery could still see troops advancing in No-Man's Land, but only half-way across. Telephones had gone forward with the fourth wave, but the wires were shattered by shells, or their bearers killed. Sergeant Gates<sup>57</sup> and Private Finnie,<sup>58</sup> of the 60th Battalion signallers, after all the rest of their party had been put out of action, returned and took forward another party. Again all were hit, including Gates, who nevertheless made a third attempt but by that time could find no trace of the battalion commander or of any other officer and returned completely exhausted. About 6.40, however, there came in a few men with news from No-Man's Land. One proved to be Major Layh, second-in-command of the 59th, who had been sent back by Lieutenant-Colonel Harris<sup>59</sup> to say that the battalion (forming the right of the Australian attack) could get no farther than half-way across No-Man's Land. The other arrivals were wounded men belonging to the 60th Battalion on the left. They said they had crossed the first line of German trenches and reached the second line, some fifty yards beyond, and that the 14th Brigade had seized the enemy's position farther to the left. Elliott accordingly sent Layh back to Colonel Harris with a message that, as the rest of the line appeared to have succeeded, the 59th must make another attempt. At the same time he despatched Lieutenant Doyle<sup>60</sup> to obtain touch with Major McCrae<sup>61</sup>—the fine young leader (member of a well-known literary and artistic family) whom Elliott had specially obtained from his own old battalion, the 7th, to command the 60th. But

<sup>57</sup> Lieut. W. H. Gates, D.C.M.; 58th Bn. Fitter; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 23 June, 1892.

<sup>58</sup> Lieut. C. P. Finnie; 58th Bn. Master mariner; of Sandringham, Vic.; b. Nottingham, Eng., 16 Sept., 1882.

<sup>59</sup> Lieut.-Col. E. A. Harris. Commanded 59th Bn., 1916. Farmer and grazier; of Donald, Vic.; b. Mount Jeffcott, Vic., 18 Mar., 1880.

<sup>60</sup> Major D. B. Doyle; 60th Bn. University student; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Toorak, Vic., 27 July, 1894.

<sup>61</sup> Major G. G. McCrae. Commanded 60th Bn., 1916. Architectural student; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Lower Hawthorn, 18 Jan., 1890. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

no traces could be found of him. At that moment—though none knew it in the Australian lines—McCrae and his whole staff and almost every officer and N.C.O. of his battalion were lying dead or wounded on the low fields round the Laies. Doyle got touch, however, with the 59th and returned with a message from Layh that the battalion could not advance farther.

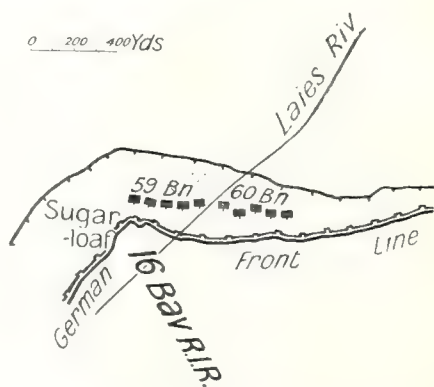
The trenches are full of the enemy (wrote Elliott, forwarding the news at 7.18 p.m. to the divisional commander). Every man who rises is shot down. Reports from wounded indicate that the attack is failing from want of support.

Pending the receipt from M'Cay of leave to throw in part of another battalion to carry the attack farther, Elliott ordered the 59th to dig in where it was; and, hearing that Colonel Harris had been put out of action by the near burst of a shell, he placed Layh (like McCrae, a trusted officer of the original 7th) in command.

By this time the returning wounded were beginning to make known the story of the attack, which may be told in a few words. The first wave, as it clambered on to its breastwork, had before it, in the sector of the 59th Battalion,

a large triangular patch of thickly-overgrown uneven ground—in reality, the tumbled foundations and orchard of an old farm. Farther out, marked through the haze of dust by a succession of willow stumps running obliquely through the gentle green ridges and furrows of the once cultivated flats, was the straight line of the

Laies. The wave moved down the slope of the parapet and then through the protecting barbed wire, which had been well cut by patrols; crossed the old farm ditch, which had been specially bridged; and was making its way through the grassy hummocks of the farm and orchard when it came under gradually increasing rifle-fire. So long as the line was moving





through the slightly broken ground this had comparatively little effect. On the left, the 60th was easily crossing the Laies, which was only two feet in depth except where widened by craters. As the wave went forward it tended to swing towards the Sugar-loaf, from which came an increasing fusillade. When, about half-way across, the troops emerged between the grassy drains, machine-guns from the Sugar-loaf, now on their right front and flank, opened with such intensity that the line quickly withered. The 59th, being almost opposite the salient, was stopped first; the line of the 60th, part of which crossed the Laies, pressed almost to the German wire before it shrivelled.

The records of the 16th Bavarian R.I.R., which faced them, attributes the repulse of these Australians and of the neighbouring British to the determination of that regiment to sustain, in spite of the fire playing upon it, continuous observation from its front-line trenches. As soon as one of its men, killed or wounded, fell from the parapet, another took his place. Thus rifle and machine-gun fire was kept up, and officers had a good grasp of the situation. "Riflemen of the 16th Bavarian R.I.R., lying at and west of Rouges Bancs," says the official historian,<sup>62</sup> "coolly, eagerly awaited the approach of the enemy and shot him down with heavy loss."<sup>63</sup> Officers were marked leading their men, and were quickly picked off.

The fragments of the first wave of the 15th Brigade sought what cover they could in shell-holes or in the channel of the Laies. Its later waves, which followed at five-minutes' intervals, were under heavy fire from the moment they topped the parapet, and on reaching the grassy undulations half-way across No-Man's Land were shattered by the same deadly machine-guns. When, about 5.55, the third wave crossed the parapet, expecting to see advancing before it at least one of the preceding lines, it could observe no movement anywhere; only the unkempt pasture, perfectly still, with the dead scattered thickly. It went forward searching for the place where, it was imagined, the previous waves must be lying ready to make the final rush. Like its predecessors, it was

<sup>62</sup> *Die Bayern im Grossen Kriege*, p. 290.

<sup>63</sup> There was an impression among the Australians, at the time, that some of these machine-guns and snipers were in front of the German trenches, and a German newspaper account spoke of one machine-gun in such a position having fired 14,000 rounds. The official German records, so far as they have been studied for the present narrative, do not confirm this notion.

stopped by the withering fire from the flank. But here and there a group, led by some surviving officer or N.C.O., pressed forward until it found itself alone, having apparently passed all the dead. In front lay the enemy's parapet, 150 yards distant, fringed by a line of Germans standing out shoulder high and, as a survivor<sup>64</sup> afterwards stated, "looking as if they were wondering what was coming next." Lieutenants Gibbs<sup>65</sup> and Carr<sup>66</sup> of the 59th are said to have been killed on the German wire; and according to one account Captain Aubrey Liddelow<sup>67</sup> of the 59th, a Victorian schoolmaster, although wounded, actually reached the German parapet with a few men, but, the position there being hopeless, withdrew them into shell-holes to await support.

With the fourth wave went the battalion commanders and their staffs. In the 60th these fell almost immediately: Major McCrae, receiving a bullet through the neck, was killed eighty yards from the Australian trench. Farther out his second-in-command, Major Elliott,<sup>68</sup> an ex-Duntroon cadet only twenty-two years of age but of splendid promise,<sup>69</sup> was mortally wounded through the chest. The adjutant, Lieutenant Wrigley,<sup>70</sup> and the signalling officer, Lieutenant Smith,<sup>71</sup> were both wounded. In the 59th Major Layh survived, but practically all the company officers in both battalions were hit in this engagement, and the great majority of the N.C.O.'s: in the 60th three company commanders were killed, and the fourth dangerously hit

<sup>64</sup> Major T. Kerr (of Maffra, Vic.), 60th Bn., who was in the third wave.

<sup>65</sup> Lieut. R. H. M. Gibbs, M.C.; 59th Bn. Medical student; of Colac, Vic.; b. Warracknabeal, Vic., 4 Feb., 1892. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>66</sup> Lieut. E. T. Carr; 59th Bn. Woolbuyer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Geelong, 13 Sept., 1889. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>67</sup> Capt. A. Liddelow; 59th Bn. Schoolmaster; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Gippsland, Vic., 10 Nov., 1876. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916. (When later one of his wounded men begged Liddelow to return with him for medical attention, he answered: "I'll never walk back into safety and leave the men I have led into such grave danger—we'll wait for reinforcements." He was presently killed by a shell.)

<sup>68</sup> Major T. P. Elliott; 60th Bn. Duntroon graduate; of Sydney; b. 18 Jan., 1894. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>69</sup> His brigadier's opinion of him is recorded: "Everyone thought he would have made a Kitchener."

<sup>70</sup> Capt. H. Wrigley, M.C.; 60th Bn. Public servant; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Scarsdale, Vic., 1 Dec., 1891.

<sup>71</sup> Lieut. J. H. Smith, 60th Bn. Clerk; of Royal Park, Vic.; b. Albert Park, Vic., 10 June, 1887. Died of wounds, 19 July, 1916.



27. AIR VIEW OF THE OPPOSING LINES AT THE "SUGAR-LOAF SALIENT," FROMELLES  
 Photographed before the battle. The nearer line is the British, the sector shown being practically that of the 5th Australian Division on the 10th of July, 1916. Facing it is the German front line, with the Sugar-Loaf Salient on the right. Fromelles can be seen near the dark wood at the right-hand top corner. The summit of its ridge is marked by the line of trees bordering the main road (across the top of the picture).

*British Air Force Photograph, lent by Maj Gen. Hon. Sir J. H. McCay.*  
*Aust. War Memorial Collection No. F5000.*





28. MEN OF THE 53RD BATTALION WAITING TO DON THEIR EQUIPMENT  
FOR THE ATTACK, 19TH JULY, 1916

Only three of those here shown came out of the action alive, and  
those three wounded.

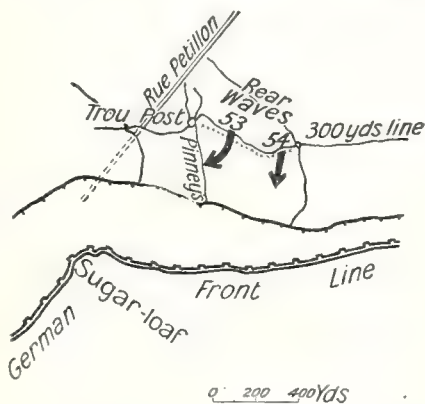
*Taken by L/Cpl. C. H. Lorking, 53rd Bn.*

*To face p. 367.*



through the head.<sup>72</sup> Layh received Elliott's message to dig in, but the area was chiefly peopled with the dead and wounded. Those of the latter who could move tried to drag themselves to shelter. The unwounded were few and scattered, and, under such fire, organised work among them was impossible.

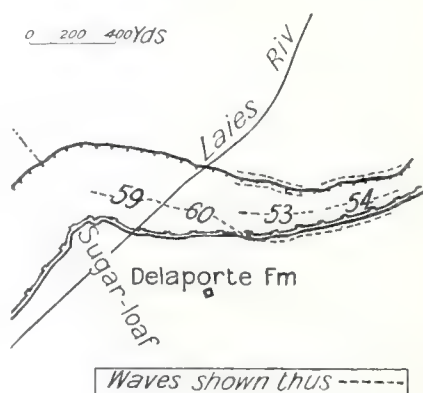
On the left of the 15th Brigade went the 14th (New South Wales). The experience of that part of it which was nearest to the 15th was in some respects similar. It was this brigade which had sent its rear waves at 5.25 from the reserve to the front line across open country. During that preliminary advance men on the right of these, including some of the Lewis gunners of the 53rd, becoming involved in some of the wire of the "300 yards" line, which had not been adequately cut, and afterwards running forward to escape shell-fire, lost formation. Part clambered



<sup>72</sup> Of the officers of the 50th, Captain A. Liddelow, Lieutenants J. C. Bowden, E. T. Carr, F. L. Cousins, R. H. M. Gibbs, H. C. Howard, A. D. Morrow, and W. H. Vaile were killed or died of wounds; and Lieut.-Col. E. A. Harris, Captains G. W. Akeroyd, F. R. Hewitt, K. G. McDonald, and Lieutenants A. C. Anderson, H. A. L. Binder, D. W. Fair, J. W. Fenton, J. D. Haddow, R. Liddelow, and G. R. Stockfeld wounded. Of the 60th, Majors G. G. McCrae, T. P. Elliott, Captains E. A. Evans, H. O. Ground, H. McD. Plowman, and Lieutenants A. C. McKinnon, J. M. Rhind, J. H. Sterling, J. H. Smith, E. E. Wright were killed or died of wounds; and Captains H. C. Piercey, T. Kerr, Lieutenants C. H. Roberts, G. B. Russell, J. L. Simpson, and H. Wrigley wounded.

A. Liddelow (schoolmaster) was of Malvern, Vic.; Bowden (bank manager) of South Yarra and Kyabram, Vic.; Carr (woolbuyer) of Geelong, Vic.; Cousins (school teacher) of Tarnagulla, Vic.; Gibbs (medical student) of Colac, Vic.; Howard (photographer) of Chelsea, Vic.; Morrow (bank accountant) of Ballarat, Vic.; Vaile (bank manager) of Hawthorn, Vic.; Harris (farmer) of Donald, Vic.; Akeroyd (clerk of courts) of Melbourne and Swan Hill, Vic.; Hewitt (estate manager) of Solomon Islands; McDonald (bank manager) of Hamilton, Vic.; Anderson (mental hospital attendant) of Newcastle, N.S.W.; Binder (farmer) of Koo-wee-rup, Vic.; Fair (ledgerkeeper) of Shepparton, Vic.; Fenton (articled law clerk) of Melbourne; Haddow (school teacher) of Surrey Hills, Vic.; R. Liddelow (accountant) of Melbourne; Stockfeld (bank clerk) of Surrey Hills, Vic.; McCrae (architectural student) of Hawthorn, Vic.; Elliott (Duntroon graduate) of Sydney; Evans (timber clerk) of Camberwell, Vic.; Ground (oil expert and accountant) of Hawthorn, Vic.; Plowman (manufacturer) of Malvern, Vic.; McKinnon (farmer) of Kingston, Vic.; Rhind (farmer and grazier) of Geelong, Vic.; Sterling (lawyer) of Flemington, Vic.; Smith (clerk) of Royal Park, Vic.; Wright (detective) of Waverley, N.S.W.; Piercey (dental surgeon) of Burnie, Tas.; Kerr (farmer and grazier) of Maffra, Vic.; Roberts (electrician) of Hawthorn, Vic.; Russell (tobacco manufacturer) of Melbourne; Simpson (clerk) of Ballarat, Vic.; and Wrigley (public servant) of Ballarat, Vic.

over a breastwork lying in front; this, however, proved to be not that of the front line but Pinney's Avenue, which here ran diagonally and was already crowded with men almost beyond the possibility of movement. Thus the 53rd Battalion, which formed the right-half of the 14th Brigade's attack, was at some disadvantage before the assault. Its first wave is recorded to have left the trench at 5.43, and, moving across No-Man's Land, to have lain down in front of the German wire. Its right, however, was exposed not only to fire from the front,<sup>73</sup> but to the same enfilade as the 15th Brigade. When the bombardment lifted, the Germans, firing and bombing from their front line, held up the right of the battalion in front of the trench until the arrival of the second wave. Farther to the left the other flank of the 53rd, and the whole wave of the 54th, swept over the enemy's parapet without trouble, finding the front trench somewhat dishevelled with artillery-fire and the enemy cowed and crouching in their dugouts. Two machine-guns were captured. The first wave stayed there temporarily to rout the enemy from his shelters, while the three succeeding lines went straight on, as ordered, seeking the trench which they were to convert into their new firing line.



In both the 53rd and the 54th the loss of officers during the first twenty minutes of the advance had been extraordinarily heavy. In the 53rd the battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Norris,<sup>74</sup> and his staff safely crossed No-Man's Land with the fourth wave; but, as the party moved

<sup>73</sup> In particular, a German machine-gun firing down the Rue Delvas (the road leading obliquely across No-Man's Land on the right of the 53rd) is thought to have caused havoc. The fact that many dead afterwards lay beside the road gives support to this conclusion. The gun was captured at an early stage by the 54th, and progress became easier.

<sup>74</sup> Lieut.-Col. I. B. Norris. Commanded 53rd Bn., 1916. Barrister; of Sydney; b. Sydney, 31 July, 1880. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

forward from that trench towards the enemy support line, a machine-gun was turned upon it, and Norris, his adjutant, and several others were killed.<sup>75</sup> Shortly afterwards the senior company-commander, Major Sampson,<sup>76</sup> was also killed. Major Croshaw,<sup>77</sup> the second-in-command, had been allotted the special duty of acting as *liaison*-officer between the battalion and the brigade, and, by personally reconnoitring the position, keeping touch with the brigadier, and endeavouring to furnish supplies, he faithfully carried out this task. The leadership of the battalion in the firing line consequently fell upon Captain Arblaster,<sup>78</sup> a very young but active officer who had passed out of Duntroon with the second batch of cadets, served in Gallipoli, and was now the senior company-commander surviving in the 53rd. Similarly in the sister battalion, the 54th, although its commander survived, Major Roy Harrison, the second-in-command, who with his signallers was leading the first wave, was shot dead in No-Man's Land; all the company commanders, all their seconds-in-command, and six junior officers were killed or wounded—about half of them before leaving the Australian line.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>75</sup> After Norris was hit, a signaller, Frank Leslie Croft (of Newtown, N.S.W.), endeavoured to bring him to the shelter of a trench, but failed.

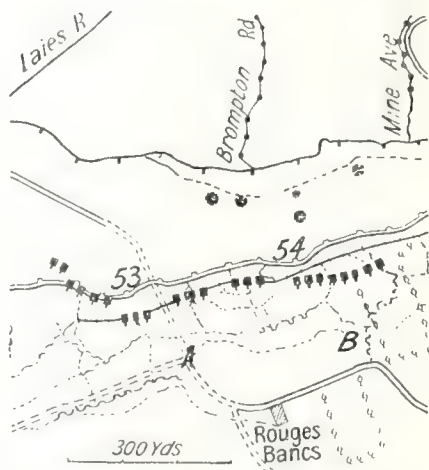
<sup>76</sup> Major V. H. B. Sampson; 53rd Bn. Insurance clerk; of Sydney; b. Upper Manilla, N.S.W., 12 May, 1888. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>77</sup> Lieut.-Col. O. M. Croshaw, D.S.O. Commanded 53rd Bn., 1916/17. Officer of British Regular Army; of Chislehurst, Kent, Eng.; b. Blackheath, Kent, Eng., 11 March, 1879. Died of wounds, 26 Sept., 1917. (Croshaw was one of several British officers who were attached to the A.I.F. in Egypt during the reorganisation, February, 1916.)

<sup>78</sup> Capt. C. Arblaster, 53rd Bn. (previously 8th L.H. Regt.). Duntroon graduate; of Footscray, Vic.; b. Pennyroyal, Vic., 21 Feb., 1895. Died of wounds while prisoner of war, 24 July, 1916.

<sup>79</sup> Of the 53rd Battalion's officers, Lieut.-Colonel Norris, Major V. H. B. Sampson, Captain H. Paulin, Lieutenants G. E. Allan, C. T. Collier, H. L. Moffitt, C. E. Mudge, B. J. Nelson, W. E. Noble, A. E. Pratt, and T. N. Rickard, were killed during this fight; and Captains C. Arblaster, F. R. Ranson, D. Thomson, Lieutenants T. Francis, A. E. Jackson, C. A. Jhonson, N. B. Lovett, H. C. W. Pain, W. E. Smith, and A. O. Thompson wounded. Of those in the 54th, Major R. Harrison, Captain H. Taylor, Lieutenants T. P. Abern, C. A. Boone, H. J. Hall, and J. G. Strangman were killed; and Major R. D. Holman, Captains J. Hansen, B. D. Jack, C. S. Lecky, Lieutenants R. G. Downing, A. H. Hirst, A. G. Morris, E. T. Sadler, C. E. Shaw, H. C. Sudbury, O. J. O. Tedder, and H. H. Young wounded. Lieut. J. T. Lang, 53rd Bn., had already been wounded in cutting the wire in No-Man's Land. Lieut. J. M. d'Alpuget of the 54th was killed on July 17. Of these officers, Paulin was of Goulburn, N.S.W.; Allan (law clerk) of Bondi, N.S.W.; Collier (solicitor) of Roseville, N.S.W.; Moffitt (accountant) of Gisborne, Vic.; Mudge (tailor) of Perth, W. Aust.; Nelson (theatrical treasurer) of Neutral Bay, N.S.W., and Dunedin, N.Z.; Noble (blacksmith) of Wollongong, N.S.W.; Pratt (clerk) of Northbridge, N.S.W.; Rickard (public servant) of Ryde, N.S.W.; Arblaster (Duntroon graduate) of Footscray, Vic.; Ranson (draughtsman) of Strathfield, N.S.W.; Thomson (member of Aust. Permanent Forces) of Sydney; Francis (civil engineer) of Ipswich, Q'land; Jackson (joiner) of South Ashfield, N.S.W.; Jhonson (bank clerk) of Parramatta, N.S.W.; Lovett (school teacher) of Wongarbon, N.S.W.; Pain (manager) of Sydney; Smith (engineer) of Ashfield, N.S.W.; Thompson (fitter) of Penrith, N.S.W.;

Thus, although these two battalions seized the enemy front line without difficulty, the waves pressing forward to occupy their final objective found almost all their well-known leaders absent and themselves faced by a problem of extreme difficulty. For, as they passed clear of the enemy's front breastwork and its adjoining alleys and shelters, expecting to see, fifty or a hundred yards beyond, the second breastwork marked on the maps—similar to their own support line—they found instead, stretching away to the distance, only low open fields covered with coarse grass and traversed here and there by hedges or rows of trees. Away to the left were the broken white walls and tree-stumps of Delangré Farm, which according to the original plan was to have been taken by the 8th Brigade; to the right front were one or two similar clusters receding into a distant background of trees and hedgerows. They pushed on across the fields, as an eye-witness<sup>80</sup> afterwards said, "advancing in the long grass as if shooting quail, strolling on and taking a 'pot-shot' every now and then at Germans who were ducking from shell-hole to shell-hole as we went on." Imagining that the breastwork must be hidden by the grass or a fold in the ground, the troops expected every moment to be met with fire from it. Here and there they came upon odd fugitive Germans cowering in grass-covered shell-holes.



Harrison (bank clerk) of Sydney; Taylor (clerk) of Newcastle, N.S.W.; Ahern (wood-turner) of Northcote, Vic.; Boone (clerk) of Mosman, N.S.W.; Hall (clerk) of Sydney and Uranquinty, N.S.W.; Strangman (insurance manager) of Gordon, N.S.W.; Holman (officer of Aust. Permanent Forces) of Sydney; Hansen (draughtsman) of Adelaide; Jack (medical student) of Malvern, Vic.; Lecky (bank clerk) of Longueville, N.S.W.; Downing (agricultural student) of Ashfield, N.S.W.; Hirst (shire clerk) of Gordon, N.S.W.; Morris (clerk) of Sydney; Sadler (grazier) of Dubbo, N.S.W.; Shaw (commercial traveller) of Melbourne; Sudbury (salesman) of Punchbowl, N.S.W.; Tedder (commercial traveller) of Stanmore, N.S.W.; Young (estate agent) of Woollahra, N.S.W.; Lang (engineering apprentice) of Burwood, N.S.W.; and d'Alpuget (accountant) of Woollahra, N.S.W.

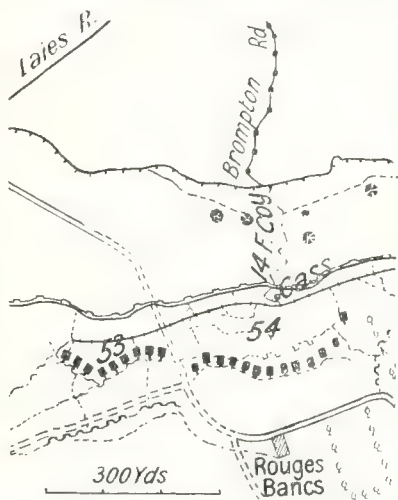
<sup>80</sup> Col. Toll, 31st Bn.



and at varying distances behind the line they stumbled upon a watery ditch or drain, in which some of the enemy had taken refuge. Crossing this, and shortly afterwards a second, they pressed on until the foremost men had gone at least 300 yards beyond the enemy's line. By this time their leaders realised that the second and third trenches must either have been non-existent in that part of the front or else were represented by these two ditches. Accordingly the surviving officers stopped their men at the farther ditch (marked "A-B" in the marginal map) and ordered them to begin rendering it defensible by cleaning it out, filling their sandbags, and placing them along its edge.

Meanwhile the first wave was clearing the shelters in and immediately behind the front line. They found that, besides the small concreted cavities in the front breastwork, the Bavarians had provided, in an alley ten yards back, a number of roomy sunken dugouts, covered with four feet of earth. Ten yards farther still were several deep comfortable chambers, approached by stairways tunnelled from ten to twenty feet down into the clay. Some of these stairways led to galleries in which troops could rest dry in winter and secure under the heaviest shell-fire. Some contained wounded or sheltering men, and most of them supplies of cigars, flares, and stick-bombs. In one such chamber, wall-papered, panelled, fitted with two bunks, an arm-chair, a stove, and electric light, Colonel Cass of the 54th established his headquarters.

As soon as the front trenches had been captured and cleared of the enemy, and a number of prisoners sent back, most of the first wave moved on, in accordance with orders, to assist in improving the forward defence line. Meanwhile half of the 14th Brigade's "third" battalion, the 55th, began the all-important work of carrying to the captured front line sandbags and ammunition from its



dumps, established by that brigade in the old front line. Major Holland<sup>81</sup> and Lieutenant Stutchbury<sup>82</sup> supervised the supply from a rear dump to those in the old front line; thence Lieutenant Palmer<sup>83</sup> transmitted them to the old German front line, now practically empty of troops: Lieutenant Robinson<sup>84</sup> further despatched them to various sections of the 54th, and Major Croshaw, during at least part of the night, to the 53rd. At the same time a sap across the old No-Man's Land was already being dug by two sections of engineers of the 14th Field Company, under the instructions of Major Bachtold<sup>85</sup> and Lieutenants Fry<sup>86</sup> and Ferguson,<sup>87</sup> about the centre of their brigade sector.<sup>88</sup>

The 8th Brigade, which formed the left of the attack, had while waiting in the front line suffered more severely than the rest of the Australian troops. The reason for this was partly that it lay on the flank, and partly that its front line, running closer to the enemy than that of the other sectors, not only received special attention from him, but also, as has already been stated, caught a number of the shells of its own artillery intended for the enemy's wire. During the few minutes immediately preceding the assault, the fire upon this sector, largely from German batteries to the north-east, was intensified. Thus a high proportion of the total casualties of the 31st Battalion occurred before the assault began.<sup>89</sup> Probably the 32nd suffered as severely. Yet,

<sup>81</sup> Lieut.-Col. A. C. S. Holland, V.D. Commanded 53rd, 54th, 55th, and 56th Bns. for various periods during 1918. Insurance broker; of Ashfield, N.S.W.; b. Ashfield, 20 Sept., 1889.

<sup>82</sup> Major E. W. Stutchbury, M.C.; 55th Bn. Public servant; of Drummoine, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 28 Feb., 1894.

<sup>83</sup> Capt. H. L. Palmer; 55th Bn. Clerk; of Petersham, N.S.W.; b. Balmain, N.S.W., 1893. Killed in action, 11 March, 1917.

<sup>84</sup> Lieut. N. A. Robinson, 55th Bn. Civil engineer and surveyor; of Beecroft, N.S.W.; b. Auckland, N.Z., 26 Feb., 1896.

<sup>85</sup> Lieut.-Col. H. Bachtold, D.S.O., M.C. C.R.E., 3rd Aust. Div., 1918. Civil engineer; of Sydney; b. Stanningley, Yorks., Eng., 22 Aug., 1891.

<sup>86</sup> Lieut. H. W. Fry, M.C.; 14th Fld. Coy., Engrs. Civil engineer; of Turramurra, N.S.W.; b. Willoughby, N.S.W., 16 Nov., 1887.

<sup>87</sup> Lieut. J. S. Ferguson, 14th Fld. Coy., Engrs. Architect; of Sydney; b. Sydney, 24 Nov., 1892. Died of wounds, 27 July, 1916.

<sup>88</sup> The original intention of digging two saps for each brigade had been modified.

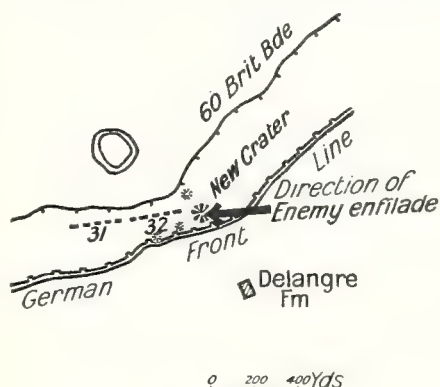
<sup>89</sup> Among the officers of the 31st Captains S. K. Fisher and W. Sharp, and Lieutenants W. Macpherson and J. F. O'Rourke were then wounded. The battalion's loss at this stage has been estimated at 400. Probably this is a heavy exaggeration, but the casualties were very serious. (Fisher belonged to Silverleigh, Q'land; Sharp to Brunswick, Vic.; Macpherson to South Melbourne; and O'Rourke to Brisbane.)

when at 5.53 the first wave of the brigade—31st (Queensland and Victoria) on the right, and 32nd (Western and South Australia) on the left—moved over the parapet towards the enemy's wire, their fighting spirit was manifestly all that their leaders could wish. The left was met by a vicious fusillade, partly from the front, but mainly from the line farther east, in front of the 60th British Brigade, which was not attacking.

To give some protection against this fire, a mine containing 1,200 lb. of ammonal was exploded at 6 o'clock in No-Man's Land just beyond the flank, it being hoped that the upturned edges of its crater would catch some of the machine-gun fire. Had the wind been favourable, gas was also to have been discharged on the

front of the 60th Brigade, but the direction of the breeze prevented this from being done. The bombardment, however, had been extended so as to fall upon the enemy on this flank, and the 60th Brigade had been asked to pin him down with its rifles and machine-guns. This instruction was duly carried out; but (according to the diary of the 6th Oxford and Bucks. Light Infantry) "after the explosion of the mine the enemy manned his parapet north of Farm Delangré, and displayed much daring in his endeavour to bring fire to bear on the assaulting Australians."

Officers and men of the 8th Brigade were, however, animated, from the brigadier to the last reinforcement, by one chief desire—to show themselves in their first action not inferior to the older troops who had fought at Gallipoli; and both battalions advanced without hesitation. The enemy at first faced this attack, and losses were heavy. Major Higgon,<sup>90</sup> leading the first line of the 32nd, was desperately



<sup>90</sup> Major J. A. Higgon, 32nd Bn., A.I.F. Officer of British Regular Army; of Pembrokeshire, Wales; b. Scolton, Treffgarne, Pembrokeshire, 11 Nov., 1874. Died of wounds, 19 July, 1916. (Higgon was one of several British officers who were attached to the A.I.F. in Egypt during the reorganisation, February, 1916.)

wounded; in the 31st, while crossing No-Man's Land, Lieutenants Hudson,<sup>91</sup> Cox,<sup>92</sup> and Spreadborough<sup>93</sup> were killed, and Major Clements,<sup>94</sup> Captain Robertson,<sup>95</sup> and Lieutenant Goudie<sup>96</sup> wounded. But as the first wave approached, with the second advancing a hundred yards behind it, the enemy on the parapet dwindled to a few scattered men, threw some bombs, and then disappeared. The Australians, clambering up the German parapet, saw numbers of the enemy running away across the open country in rear. In the alleys and dugouts of the front system, a few, perhaps rallied by an officer or N.C.O., tried to hold their ground. One Bavarian subaltern, bomb in hand, was shot by Lieutenant Drayton<sup>97</sup> of the 31st, who came face to face with him round a traverse. The crew of one of the enemy machine-guns, of which at least three were found in the sector, were just leaving their gun when an ex-gunner of the Australian permanent artillery, by name Weakley,<sup>98</sup> leapt over the parapet beside them. The rearmost men turned to face him, but he had accounted for four in succession when he was killed by shrapnel which burst overhead. A number of prisoners were eventually captured.<sup>99</sup> This fighting made the passage of No-Man's Land much easier for the subsequent waves, which passed over the enemy's front line while the bombing of dugouts was still proceeding, and emerged, as the 14th Brigade had done, into the grass meadows beyond. As in the sister brigade, except for a long built-up communication trench on the extreme left, leading back past the high-banked earthworks at Delangré Farm 300 yards beyond, the men could find no defence even remotely resembling

<sup>91</sup> Lieut. A. Hudson, 31st Bn. Tea buyer and expert; of Sydney; b. Greenwich, Eng., 25 Feb., 1875. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>92</sup> Lieut. H. Cox; 31st Bn. Insurance manager; of Wangaratta and Brighton, Vic.; b. Albert Park, Vic., 27 Jan., 1875. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>93</sup> Lieut. E. W. Spreadborough; 31st Bn. Schoolmaster; of Warwick, Q'land; b. Warwick, 12 Dec., 1874. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>94</sup> Major C. E. Clements; 31st Bn. Area officer and penal warder; of Coburg and Benalla, Vic.; b. Sydney, 28 May, 1878. Died of wounds, 22 July, 1916.

<sup>95</sup> Capt. G. G. Robertson, 31st Bn. Duntroon graduate; of Bradshaw's Creek, Vic.; b. Bradshaw's Creek, 7 Aug., 1894. Died of wounds, 20 July, 1916.

<sup>96</sup> Lieut. A. Goudie, 31st Bn. Grazier; of Yannathan, Vic.; b. Yarraville, Vic., 19 Nov., 1886.

<sup>97</sup> Capt. F. Drayton; 31st Bn. Clerk; b. Boulder City, W. Aust., 6 July, 1889.

<sup>98</sup> Pte. P. Weakley (No. 318; 31st Bn.). Wharf labourer; of Brisbane; b. Adelaide, Jan., 1884. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>99</sup> Thirty-five were retained in the trench all night, as there were no men available for conducting them to the rear. They were sent to the Australian lines when the enemy counter-attacked next morning.



those breastworks, which were the only "trenches" the 8th Brigade had seen, except in Egypt. Part of the left of the 32nd was under the impression that its duty was to attack Delangré Farm, the countermanding order apparently not having reached the front-line troops. The German resistance from that place, was however, too strong and advance in its direction failed; but the remainder of the objective had to be sought. The sketch-maps with which some of the company commanders had been provided showed, on this flank, a crowded system of second and third trenches crossed like a gridiron by short communication alleys and all connected on the left with the main communication trench, which the troops could see, and over which some of them now swarmed. But of the grid-work nothing could be found, unless it was represented by several watery ditches met with in the grass. With some doubt Major White<sup>100</sup>—one of the few officers who survived unhurt<sup>101</sup>—called back Captain Halkyard<sup>102</sup> (who, with some



*Trenches as shown in British maps (summer of 1916)*

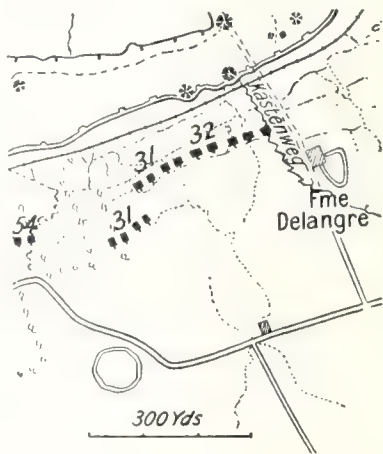
<sup>100</sup> Major A. R. White, M.C.; 32nd Bn. Draughtsman; of Mount Lawley, W. Aust.; b. 31 Oct., 1886.

<sup>101</sup> Of the officers of the 31st and 32nd Battalions, there were killed or wounded—in addition to those mentioned elsewhere—the following: 31st Bn.—(wounded) Captain E. Russell (medical officer), Lieutenants M. E. Denning, R. K. Hibbs, and J. R. S. MacLeod; 32nd Bn.—(killed) Lieutenants J. Benson, R. T. Griffen, F. Hulks, and A. Paterson; (died of wounds) Lieutenant J. Ion; (wounded) Captains F. C. Lloyd, C. S. Tratman, Lieutenants A. Campbell, J. B. O'Connor, A. T. Rogers, and C. B. Thomas.

Russell (medical practitioner) was of Stanthorpe, Q'land; Denning (student) of Tokyo, Japan, and Brisbane, Q'land; Hibbs (mercantile clerk) of Caulfield, Vic.; MacLeod (bank official) of Melbourne; Benson (tramway employee) of Cheltenham, S. Aust.; Griffen (clerk) of Riverton, S. Aust.; Hulks (member of Aust. Permanent Forces) of Woollahra, N.S.W.; Paterson (storekeeper) of Trayning, W. Aust.; Ion (member of Aust. Permanent Forces) of Leederville, W. Aust.; Lloyd (public servant) of Goodwood Park, S. Aust.; Tratman (hospital secretary and radiographer) of Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.; Campbell (grazier) of Broadford, Vic.; O'Connor (painter) of Mount Gambier, S. Aust.; Rogers (member of Aust. Permanent Forces) of Coolgardie, W. Aust.; and Thomas (clerk) of St. Peters, S. Aust.

<sup>102</sup> Capt. C. L. Halkyard; 32nd Bn. Duntroon graduate; of South Yarra, Vic.; b. South Yarra, 5 Oct., 1895.

men, had gone beyond these drains) and, stationing the front line of the 32nd in the farther of two ditches, with the big communication trench on its left, anxiously referred to the second-in-command of the battalion, Major Hughes,<sup>103</sup> who at that time came up. Hughes agreed that, according to the meagre description in the battalion's orders, this must be the objective; but the ditch (he afterwards said) "was not a fire-trench or, if it had been, had been flooded and dis-used for a considerable time. It was obvious that there was no protection there for our men." To the right front could be seen part of the 31st pushing farther ahead, and the two officers therefore had serious doubts whether they were far enough forward.



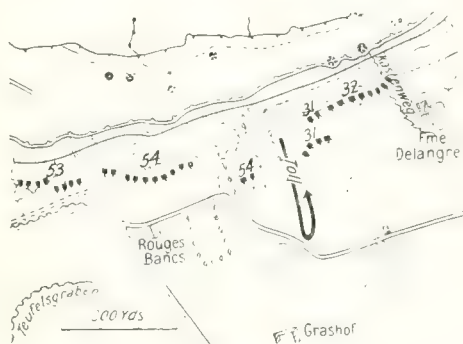
The British shells were falling close in front, and little was visible through the dust of their bursts. Hughes, moving cautiously forward to reconnoitre, was almost immediately wounded. He refused to be carried out of the fight, but crawled to a position just behind the trench, so that, without being in the men's way, he could direct them; but he was practically unconscious, and the control of the front line on this flank lay thenceforth with Captain White.

The troops which Major Hughes had seen to his right front were the rear waves of the 31st with Colonel Toll, who, in consequence of their heavy casualties, had combined his third and fourth waves before leaving the Australian trench, and led them out together. On reaching the German line, as no word of success had yet come back from the second wave, he had decided to leave in the German front line only enough men to establish Lewis-gun posts, and to go forward himself with all the rest. It had so happened that in front of him there were even fewer traces of rear defences than

<sup>103</sup> Major J. J. Hughes 32nd Bn. Public servant; of Adelaide; b. Port Pirie, S. Aust., 11 Oct., 1875.

elsewhere. Some way across the open they had found a ditch or "creek" of stagnant water, waist-deep, between high thistles, and containing the bodies of a few dead Germans. So full was this channel that the enemy had been accustomed to cross it on foot-bridges, on one of which stood a soldier of the 31st ineffectively prodding with his bayonet at a German who disappeared entirely beneath the water at each thrust, and, putting up his head at intervals, asked for "Officer" and disappeared again. He was rescued and sent to the rear by Lieutenant Trounson,<sup>104</sup> Lewis-gun officer of the 31st, who was strolling past with his machine-gun over his shoulder. Beyond this ditch the 31st passed only a shallow sap, where little more than the sods had been turned, and in which were some wounded Germans who surrendered. Others could be seen, all making for Delangré farmhouse, the ruins of which were now close to the extreme left of the line.

At this stage a German machine-gun opened from somewhere in the middle distance, which was obscured by trees and hedgerows,<sup>105</sup> and the troops accordingly took cover in this furrow, where, firing a few volleys at fixed range in the direction of the sound, they silenced the gun. As no recognisable support trench had been met with, Toll, after consultation with Major Eckersley,<sup>106</sup> decided to place his front line there, and sent by pigeon<sup>107</sup> a message to his brigadier:



6.30 p.m. Four waves well over 200 yards beyond enemy's parapets. No enemy works found yet, so am digging in.

<sup>104</sup> Capt. L. J. Trounson, M.C.; 31st Bn. School teacher; of Ararat and Hollybush, Vic.; b. Maryborough, Vic., 22 Aug., 1895.

<sup>105</sup> The Germans, for night-firing on the Australian communications, had constructed a machine-gun position not far from Les Clochers, in a position known as the "Hofgarten." According to the historian of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R., this helped to check the advance. It was never (he says) discovered by the British or Australians, "so cleverly had it been covered with a screen of trees and shrubs." (*History of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R.*, p. 44.)

<sup>106</sup> Major P. A. M. Eckersley. Commanded (temporarily) 31st Bn., 1916/17; 14th Training Battalion, 1918. Clerk; of Clayfield, Q'land; b. Ipswich, Q'land, 17th Dec., 1866.

<sup>107</sup> The pigeons, of which both Toll and Cass sent several, were at the divisional pigeon-loft within seventeen minutes of their despatch from the front line; this method of communication with headquarters was much the quickest.

Then, leaving Eckersley and the adjutant, Lieutenant Bernard,<sup>108</sup> to supervise the digging, but taking his intelligence officer, Lieutenant Still,<sup>109</sup> and a messenger named Eddie<sup>110</sup> with the pigeon-basket, he strode on through the curtain of fire of the Australian artillery to make sure that the objective was not still ahead. After advancing another 200 yards without seeing any defence-line, he came out upon a road, which he recognised as being far beyond the objective. Several hundred yards farther still could be seen barbed-wire entanglements—probably those protecting a German strong-point, known as “Grashof,”<sup>111</sup> then in course of construction near the farm of La Biette. Toll knew that this could not possibly be the “support-line” referred to in the operation orders, and it appeared to be a strong position. Small parties of the 14th Brigade could be seen away on the right.<sup>112</sup> Toll tried to communicate with them, and Bernard went out to obtain touch, but was almost immediately shot. Toll, returning, found that Major Eckersley’s line was still out of touch with any troops on either flank. The sun was setting, and from Ferme Delangré and the houses of Les Clochers village beyond there came the incessant chatter of machine-guns. The enemy’s artillery had found and was effectively shelling the unprotected troops, who were also caught by occasional shells from their own artillery. The men were consequently under no small strain, and German reinforcements could be seen moving from the rear to Delangré Farm. Concluding that the advanced position was unsafe, Toll decided at 7.14 to make his main position the old

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<sup>108</sup> Capt. V. D. Bernard, 31st Bn. Bank clerk; of Mackay, Q’land; b. Brisbane, 10 June, 1895.

<sup>109</sup> Lieut. G. A. Still, M.C.; 31st Bn. Surveyor; of Maryborough, Q’land; b. Reigate, Surrey, Eng., 4 Jan., 1883. (Still had been buried by a shell before the attack and afterwards lost his sight in one eye.)

<sup>110</sup> Sgt. R. Eddie (No. 663; 31st Bn.). Typewriter mechanic; of Yarraville, Vic.; b. Port Melbourne, 1894.

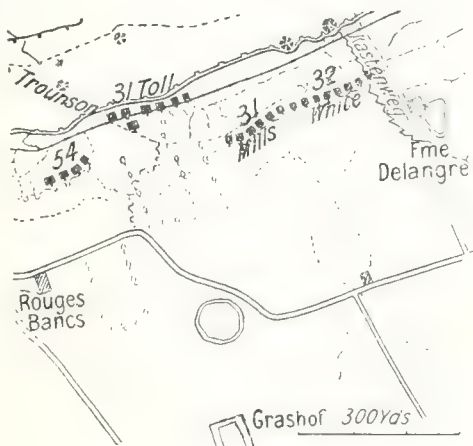
<sup>111</sup> See sketch on p. 399.

<sup>112</sup> These included a machine-gun of the 8th Company which had been carried forward by Private W. D. Jeater and another man, who were searching for the German line. They had actually crossed it, full of water (they thought it was “a creek”), and were facing a distant rampart—probably that of the unfinished communication trench to Rouges Bancs—from which the Germans were firing with machine-guns. Jeater and his mate shortly afterwards fell back on the old German front line, the only tenable defensive work they had passed.



German front line,<sup>113</sup> that being the only defensible work he had seen,<sup>114</sup> but he subsequently arranged with Major Eckersley that part of the battalion should remain as a covering force 150 yards in front, in general alignment with the 14th Brigade. One company under Captain C. Mills<sup>115</sup> had, as it turned out, already taken up such a position in an unfinished length of the same derelict trench which, several hundred yards farther east, had been occupied by Captain

White of the 32nd. Eckersley fell back upon this, and, on his being wounded in the head, the command of the advanced line of the 31st was assumed by Mills. Out of touch with him across the grasslands, a quarter of a mile to the right, lay—although he did not know it—the left flank of the 14th Brigade, which was in touch, through the old



German front line in its left rear, with the right post of the 31st under Lieutenants Trounson and Drayton. Drayton placed a smaller post in an old communication sap in front of his position, to give warning of any approaching counter-attack; but this was far in rear of Mills, across the gap between whom and the 14th Brigade no trench existed: the space was unoccupied, and Mills, though in constant touch with White on his left and with Toll in rear, was unable even to ascertain the position of the Australian line beyond the break.

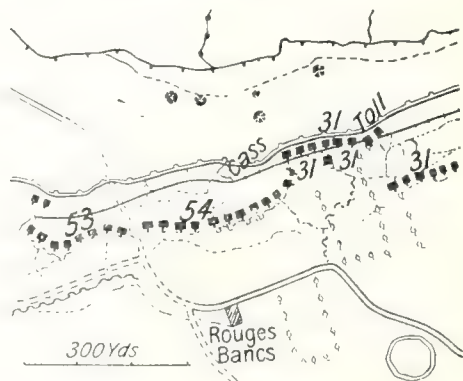
<sup>113</sup> A few of the 32nd Battalion who were with this advanced line appear to have taken this order as applying only to the 31st, and remained where they were. These, together with Lieutenant Bernard, whose leg had been broken, were captured next morning by the Germans. Pte. J. E. V. Lowe (of Sydney) of the 31st, who had been badly wounded, was carried back by Lieut. Aland under severe fire the whole way to the old German front-line.

<sup>114</sup> One of his sergeants, F. Law, had pointed out to him the existence of a ditch farther back, but Toll regarded it as unsuitable for a main defensive position.

<sup>115</sup> Capt. C. Mills, O.B.E.; 31st Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Auburn, Vic.; b. Heatherton, Vic., 17 July, 1876.

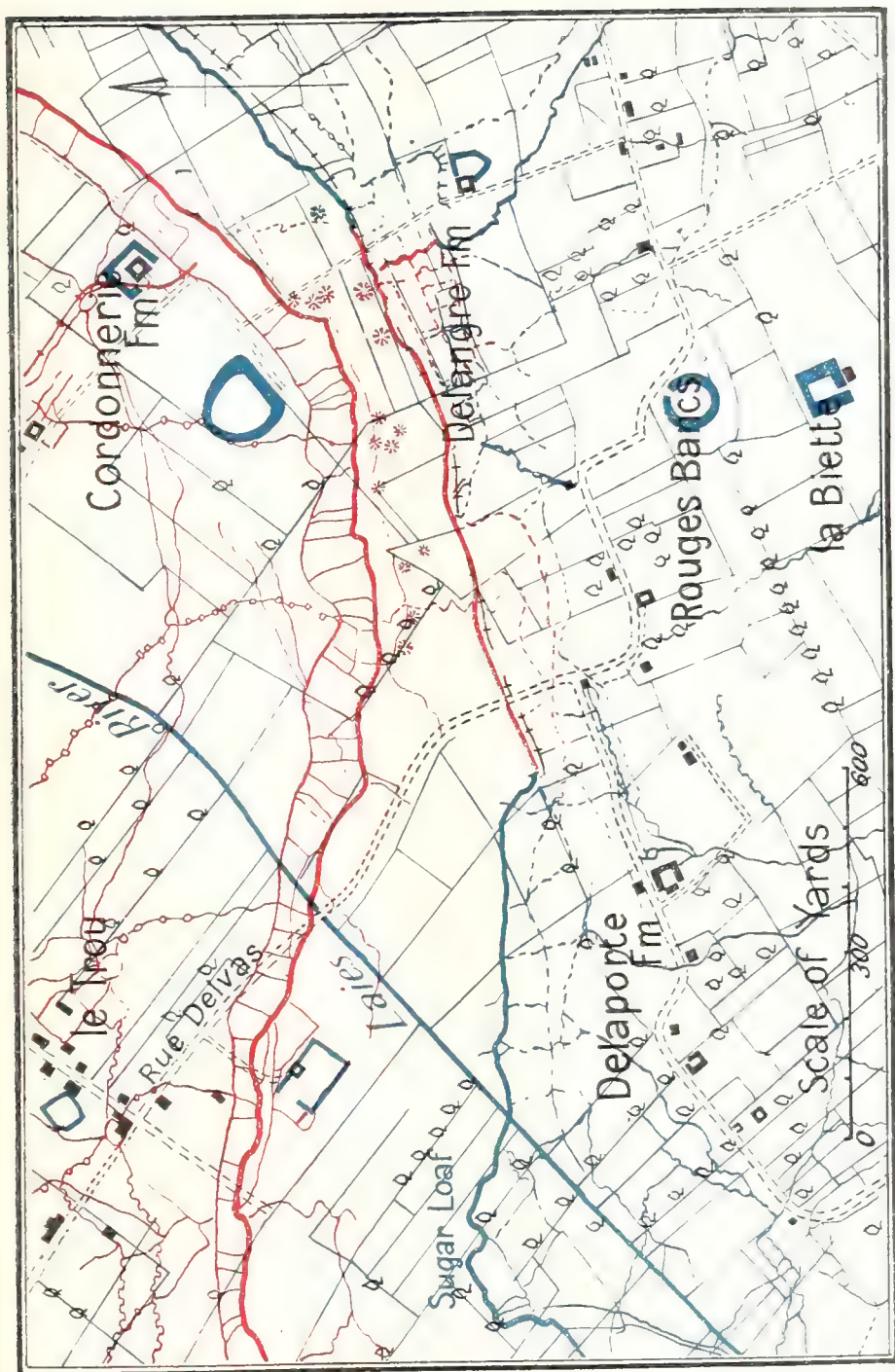
The chief reason for the lack of connection between parties digging the advanced line was the thinning out of the waves by heavy casualties early in the operation. Moreover officers were few, and from the ditches it was difficult to see far to right or left. The haze was increased by the fact that about 8 o'clock two more ammunition dumps, in the old lines of the 8th and 14th Brigades respectively, were set on fire. The dense smoke, rolling across the battlefield from the Australian rear, was at first mistaken by Toll for gas, and the alarm was given. Away on the left front the village of Les Clochers was burning, and British shells had ignited part of Delangré Farm. The smoke haze actually served as a useful screen for the passage of some of the Australian machine-guns across No-Man's Land.

About 7 o'clock, when Toll withdrew from his advanced line, that of the 14th Brigade also, finding itself under the shells of its own artillery and a certain number of casualties occurring, was withdrawn by its officers to the intermediate ditch, assumed to be the second German trench.<sup>116</sup> In this, as in the drains occupied by the 8th Brigade, there was eighteen inches of water and mud. Such was the advanced position which the two brigades, not continuously, but in a series of mostly isolated



groups, set about converting into a new firing line at nightfall on July 19th, the artillery, at 7.30, increasing its rate of fire to cover them against counter-attack. The artillery commanders were uncertain of the infantry's position, but there is no question that it was occupying precisely that which was intended. The water channels—to which,

<sup>116</sup> At 7 o'clock an artillery observer reported: "150 of our infantry came out of Rouges Bancs farm (N.15.b.8.8.) and walked into hostile trenches at N.9.b.8.4. (in front of Cass's headquarters). They appeared to have men in dark uniforms, probably prisoners." It is probable that what was seen was the retirement from the front ditch, which was not far short of Rouges Bancs farm.

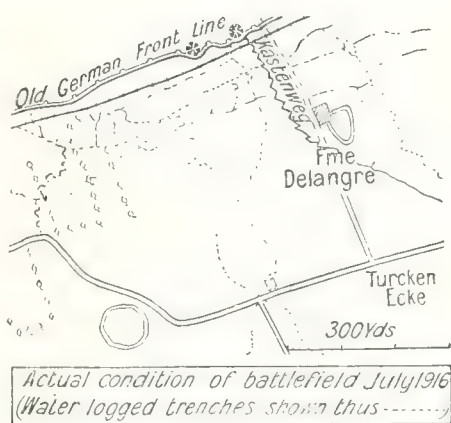


THE BATTLEFIELD OF FROMELLES, SHOWING THE GERMAN TRENCHES CAPTURED BY THE 5TH AUSTRALIAN DIVISION ON 10TH JULY, 1916





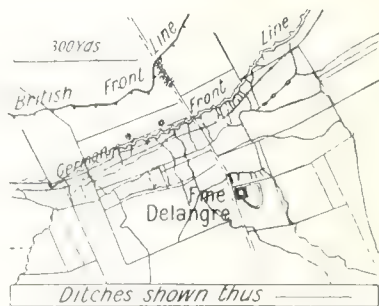
even to this day, those who saw them invariably refer as "the ditches," or "the drains," or sometimes "the creek"—were actually the abandoned relics of the extensive trench-system commenced by the Bavarians in the summer of 1915, but abandoned in autumn when flooded by the rising of the Laies. Such diggings almost immediately became overgrown with long grass and rank herbage, and were indistinguishable from ditches, except in some parts where traces of the old revetting were still visible; a few sections were indeed ditches forming part of the system draining the fields, but had been used as trenches by the enemy in the early days of the war. During the night, as the drainage channels throughout the area were opened or choked by shell-bursts, the water rose in them as it did in the Laies, which by morning was running deep. The only communication trench in this area which had been passable during the winter of 1915-1916 was that of which the 8th Brigade had seized the mouth just short of Delangré Farm. Being solidly built with earth-filled ammunition chests, it was known as the "Kastenweg" ("Chest Way"). It had been built over the system of early gridironed trenches,<sup>117</sup> of whose existence most of the present garrison of Bavarians were probably unaware, and the embankments forming its sides actually blocked their ends. This was



easily discernible in the aeroplane-photographs from which the British trench-maps were drawn, and could have been discovered, had there been time for close study, even by the inexperienced staff of the 5th Australian Division; but the British general staff had been slow to develop specialist

<sup>117</sup> That is, those in which the 32nd lay.

instruction in the interpretation of air-photographs,<sup>118</sup> and the abandoned trenches had consequently been shown on the map as if they were part of the enemy's main occupied system. Whereas, therefore, Haking and his staff assumed that the troops would be transferring the sandbag parapet from one side to the other of an inhabited trench-line, the 8th and 14th Brigades, often knee-deep in water, were endeavouring to fill their few sandbags with mud dug from their grassy ditches. Being short of shovels, the men worked at first with entrenching tools, and so clayey was the soil that it had often to be pulled off the spade with the fingers. To build up in this fashion a defensible breastwork seemed to many of the workers an almost hopeless task.



*Trenches as shown in British maps (summer of 1916).*

This difficult process was also constantly hampered, especially on the left, by absence of materials. The original carrying parties—in the 14th Brigade, half the 55th Battalion; in the 8th Brigade, half the 30th—had crossed No-Man's Land with their first loads of sandbags and ammunition on the heels of the fourth wave. But with the commencement of the attack the enemy had brought his artillery-fire heavily down upon the old No-Man's Land, which was also much swept by machine-gun and rifle bullets, making the carriage of supplies across the open very dangerous and burdensome. The scene at about 6.30, when the first fatigue parties were crossing, has been vividly described by an N.C.O. who was wounded while carrying forward some of the Lewis guns of the 53rd and the brigade machine-guns.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>118</sup> In the I Anzac Corps a junior staff-officer (Lieutenant Herbertson) and a war correspondent had at first been left to discover, mainly by themselves, the interpretation of obscure points in the air-photographs of the corps front. At a later stage a junior New Zealand clerical officer, attached to the corps air-squadron, and the draughtsmen (N.C.O.'s) of the corps topographical section became, by sheer practice, the experts chiefly relied on by the corps staff; others were similarly developed in the artillery.

<sup>119</sup> The leader of this party was Lieutenant Briggs of the 14th Machine Gun Company. Seeing that some of the guns of the 53rd were late, he suggested that they should go with him. "He was very cool," says the report, "smoking a cigarette. He shouted 'Are you ready?' and waved his hand, and over they all went. Later in the action Briggs was killed."

The moment they cleared the top of the parapet it became hideous with machine-gun fire. There was a slight slope—our line (of men) ran down it, and then went splash into the ditch up to their waists in water. It was slimy, but it gave some protection. The leading Lewis gunner turned to the right and led the guns along the ditch, and then to the left along a continuation of it, which ran straight towards the German line. It was very good protection for the guns. About 40 yards along it the leader got hit in the neck by a machine-gun bullet. He choked—one of the gunners tied him up, and, with another, they lay there for half-an-hour or longer. The ditch was full of wounded and dying men—like a butcher's shop—men groaning and crying and shrieking. Ammunition was being carried up by pairs of men, the boxes being carried on sticks. One man would go down, and crash would go the box into the water. Shelling was very heavy. The engineers (14th Field Company) were digging a communication trench at this point beside the stream; the wounded were hopping over into this, and the engineers were having an awful time trying to dig the trench. So many men were falling that things were clearly wrong; but, when the word about retiring came along, the men received it with: "What—retreating? Not on your life!" At the same time, things were so broken that they had a sort of fear that it was true.

Many of the carrying parties, on reaching the old German front, were sent on with their loads to the groups digging in the ditches; the commanders of these scanty parties welcomed the arrival not only of the loads, but of the officers and men, whom in many cases they set to dig across the gaps. The carriers, especially in the 8th Brigade, were only too eager to stay and join in what was, for most of them, their first fight. The result was that hardly any organised parties of the 30th Battalion, and comparatively few of the 55th, returned for a second load. The officers of the latter appear to have been told that, if urgently required at the front, they might stay there, and, hearing of the extreme need for leaders, Lieutenant Palmer, who was organising the 14th Brigade's supply from the Australian trench, did not attempt to get them back. But Lieutenant N. E. F. Pinkstone,<sup>120</sup> Sergeants Panton<sup>121</sup> and Matthews,<sup>122</sup> Privates Hassett,<sup>123</sup> Perkins,<sup>124</sup> Chadwick,<sup>125</sup> and

<sup>120</sup> Capt. N. E. F. Pinkstone; 55th Bn. Journalist; of Peat's Ridge, N.S.W.; b. Cootamundra, N.S.W., Feb., 1894.

<sup>121</sup> Lieut. A. W. Panton; 55th Bn. Farmer; of Gunnedah, N.S.W.; b. Kempsey, N.S.W., June, 1894.

<sup>122</sup> Lieut. A. R. Matthews, D.C.M.; 55th Bn. Lorry driver; of Sydney; b. Surry Hills, N.S.W., 25 May, 1887.

<sup>123</sup> Pte. J. Hassett (No. 3588; 55th Bn.). Wickerworker; of Leichhardt, N.S.W.; b. Surry Hills, N.S.W., 1885.

<sup>124</sup> Cpl. J. A. Perkins, M.M. (No. 3150; 55th Bn.). Tram conductor; of Sydney; b. Hull, Yorks., Eng., 15 Dec., 1893.

<sup>125</sup> Lieut. L. Chadwick, M.C., M.M.; 55th Bn. Orchardist; of Burwood, N.S.W.; b. Castlemaine, Vic., March, 1896.

a few others worked through the night, taking forward supplies and leading carrying parties formed from odd men of all units. It is recorded that Sergeant Panton crossed No-Man's Land on this duty at least a dozen times.

In spite of these difficulties the fairly numerous reports reaching M'Cay from most parts of his front about 7.30 were satisfactory: in the 14th Brigade, Major Croshaw of the 53rd had just returned with news that the troops were digging in 150 yards beyond the old German front, but that reinforcements were badly needed. At 7.36 a similar message was received from Colonel Cass of the 54th. The pigeon messages, sent by Colonel Toll of the 31st during his journey out in front of the line, had duly come to hand, together with another sent after his retirement saying that he could hold the old German front line "if reinforcements are sent over urgently." The fact that part of the 31st was farther out was indicated in a message sent at 7 p.m. by Lieutenant Walker<sup>126</sup> of the 8th Machine Gun Company:

Major Clements and Captain MacPherson<sup>127</sup> wounded. Am in bent position under Captain Mills in drain 200 yards (in) front of enemy's front line trenches. Own shrapnel hitting us and enemy finding range. Digging in.

Farther still to the left two companies of the 32nd reported about 7.35 that they were holding the German third line, and that the enemy artillery now had their range. They asked for the support of their own guns.

The reports were entirely silent as to the situation on the flanks, where the chief danger really lay. The 8th Brigade, forming the left of the whole attack, had been ordered by M'Cay to exercise special care in barricading all trenches leading out of the position, whether on its flank or towards the German rear. Of the measures arranged by the 32nd for this purpose no record is available, but the bombing officer, Lieutenant Chinner, was to be responsible for blocking and holding the old German front line on that flank. To a

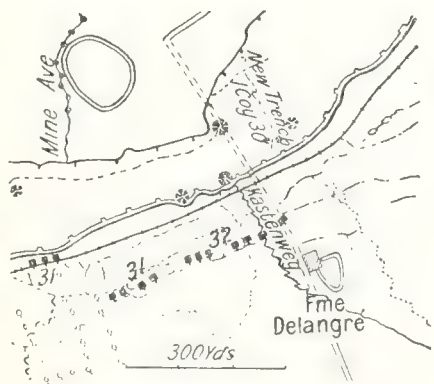
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<sup>126</sup> Lieut. R. Walker; 8th M.G. Coy. Labourer; of Anthony's Lagoon, Northern Territory; b. Dublin, Ireland, July, 1878.

<sup>127</sup> Capt. W. Macpherson, 31st Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of South Melbourne, Vic.; b. Auldearn, Nairn, Scotland, 25 Feb., 1872.



company of the 30th, working under the engineers, had been allotted the still more difficult task of joining up that flank to the old Australian firing line by digging a trench across No-Man's Land to the extreme left of the captured position. This would be, not a communication trench, but part of the new front line. It was therefore to start from the existing front line, some distance beyond the left of the attack. When the assault was launched, the allotted troops began to emerge at this point, but found that the barbed-wire in front of the Australian line had not been sufficiently cut. An opening was, however, presently found, and the first section of the working party passed through it and began to cross No-Man's Land. To ensure the trench being dug in the right direction, there went with this section Sergeant Garland,<sup>128</sup> carrying a sign-post which he was to plant on the German parapet at the easternmost point captured by the brigade, and Lieutenant Lees<sup>129</sup> with tape and pegs to mark across No-Man's Land a "traversed" line for the trench. As the enemy was still in possession of his front fifty yards beyond the point towards which these men were making, and towards



which their men would be strung out for digging, the task obviously involved extreme danger. Garland had almost reached the far side of No-Man's Land when he was shot dead; but Sergeant Harrison,<sup>130</sup> who was in charge of the first party, and a few men crossed No-Man's Land unhurt. The survivors were lined out near the old German trench, and, taking advantage of such partial cover as was afforded by shell-holes, began to dig a series of potholes, the intention

<sup>128</sup> Sgt. C. S. Garland (No. 2038; 30th Bn.). Mining overseer; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Carcoar, N.S.W., 16 Oct., 1886. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>129</sup> Lieut. J. S. Lees; 30th Bn. Farmer; of Goulburn, N.S.W.; b. Wanaaring, N.S.W., 4 Sept., 1890. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>130</sup> Lieut. F. W. Harrison; 30th Bn. Jeweller; of Melbourne; b. Albert Park, Vic., 22 Feb., 1895.

being, as the excavations extended, to send out more men to connect them into a continuous trench. Lieutenant Lees, however, was very soon killed, and, of the handful of men working on the farther side of No-Man's Land, Privates Rich<sup>131</sup> and Tisbury,<sup>132</sup> while digging, were shot dead by snipers in the German line.

On the side of No-Man's Land nearer to the Australian trench, the work had met with even greater difficulty. The two digging-parties which were to follow the first were met, as they passed through the gap in the entanglement, by the fire of a German machine-gun which was evidently laid on to that point, but which the first party, emerging unexpectedly, had escaped.<sup>133</sup> The second and third parties were thus practically annihilated. It was noted, however, that the gun caught the men about the knees, it being apparently fixed, or possibly so screened that it could not fire lower. Thus Captain Allen,<sup>134</sup> second-in-command to Major Beardsmore,<sup>135</sup> whose company was making the attempt, and a sergeant of engineers, keeping low and protected in a measure by the bodies of the fallen men, were able to push forward sandbags, gradually screening part of the deadly passage way; and so, in spite of almost overwhelming difficulties, the work on this trench proceeded. The taping of its course had proved out of the question, but the officers concerned—Lieutenants Farr<sup>136</sup> of the 8th Field Company, and Lees and Cadden<sup>137</sup> of the 30th—dispensed with this proceeding as unnecessary, since an irregular trace would give sufficient protection against enfilade.

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<sup>131</sup> Pte. D. C. Rich (No. 1134; 30th Bn.). Baker; of Williamstown, Vic.; b. Rutherglen, Vic., 21 Dec., 1894. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>132</sup> Pte. C. F. Tisbury (No. 1623; 30th Bn.). Clerk; of Leyton, Essex, Eng., and Sydney, N.S.W.; b. Clapton, London, Eng., 1892. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>133</sup> Immediately outside the Australian trench were the remains of an old front-line system long since abandoned by the British, but which broke the even surface of the ground and afforded some protection as far as the Australian entanglement.

<sup>134</sup> Capt. R. A. M. Allen, M.C.; 30th Bn. Medical student; of Roseville, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 20 May, 1893.

<sup>135</sup> Lieut.-Col. R. H. Beardsmore, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 32nd Bn., 1916/17. Public servant; of Strathfield, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 12 Aug., 1873.

<sup>136</sup> Capt. T. A. L. Farr; 13th Fld. Coy., Engrs. Junior assistant engineer; of Cottesloe, W. Aust.; b. London, 13 June, 1894. (Farr had previously served in the infantry—see *Vol. II*, p. 305.)

<sup>137</sup> Lieut. R. L. Cadden, 30th Bn. Wool clerk; of Beecroft and Bondi, N.S.W.; b. Caulfield, Vic., 4 Sept., 1889. Died 28 Dec., 1917.

The other danger-point on the left, the long communication trench (Kastenweg), was to be cleared and held by part of the bombers of the 32nd. While these were driving remnants of the enemy up its channel, Lieutenant S. E. G. Mills,<sup>138</sup> though shot through right wrist and left leg when crossing No-Man's Land, had led the left of the 32nd more swiftly across the open to the right of the trench. The fleeing Germans had broken through a gap in the parapet of the Kastenweg and been shot down as they ran towards Delangré Farm, and Mills with the bombers and others had blocked the trench. Its high ramp automatically sealed and protected the left ends of the 32nd Battalion's ditches. A machine-gun of the 8th Company<sup>139</sup> was placed on it by Mills, to whom Major White gave control of this flank,<sup>140</sup> and as an additional precaution Sergeant Lewis<sup>141</sup> was ordered to construct by its side, well in advance of the 32nd's front, an observation post to give warning of the enemy's approach up the trench.

Thus on the left both the Kastenweg and the old German front line were held, the latter apparently up to a point slightly east of the Kastenweg. Some sort of a barrier appears to have been made and held by the bombers of the 32nd under Lieutenant Chinner,<sup>142</sup> and a machine gun under Lieutenant Lillecrapp<sup>143</sup> posted, but there was dangerous vagueness among the senior commanders as to the steps taken, and there is no record of other special measures to guard against a German irruption, although it was here that counter-attacks were especially to be expected. The Germans were close,<sup>144</sup> and the sound of bombs came constantly from that direction.

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<sup>138</sup> Capt. S. E. G. Mills, M.C.; 32nd Bn. Farmer; of Albany, W. Aust.; b. Dundas, N.S.W., July, 1881. Killed in action, 25 Oct., 1917.

<sup>139</sup> This company was commanded by Captain T. R. Marsden (of Sydney), who throughout the night was most active in controlling and supplying his guns.

<sup>140</sup> White had also Captains J. M. Hutchens and C. L. Halkyard and Lieutenants J. Ion and T. P. Hagan. Lieutenant A. Paterson was killed leading the first wave in No-Man's Land, Lieutenant J. Benson at the objective; Captains C. S. Tratman and F. C. Lloyd had been wounded in No-Man's Land. White's own headquarters were in the foremost ditch on the right of the 32nd's sector.

<sup>141</sup> Sgt. C. F. Lewis (No. 407; 32nd Bn.). Clerk; of Payneham, S. Aust.; b. Mylor, S. Aust., 6 Oct., 1896.

<sup>142</sup> Lieut. E. H. Chinner, 32nd Bn. Bank clerk; of Peterborough, S. Aust.; b. Peterborough, 15 Jan., 1894. Died of wounds, 20 July, 1916.

<sup>143</sup> Lieut. M. A. Lillecrapp, 8th M.G. Coy. Bank clerk; of Adelaide; b. Georgetown, S. Aust., 1895.

<sup>144</sup> It was among these that two carrying platoons of Major Purser's company of the 30th unsuspectingly fell, having headed too far to the left in traversing No-Man's Land. The trench was then crowded with Germans, apparently in

On the right flank of the Australians the obscurity and danger of the position were, if possible, greater. It was assumed that part of the 15th Brigade was "in"; an artillery officer reported having seen Australians in part of the sector attacked by its left battalion, the 60th. Statements by some of the wounded tended to the same conclusion, and Colonel Cass of the 54th, now in the German lines, received through the 53rd on his right some report that it was in touch with the 60th. Finding presently that he was connected also with the 31st on his left, he assumed that both flanks were secure, and thenceforth devoted his energy to the obtaining of sandbags, ammunition, and reinforcements for the scanty parties consolidating the front. In actual fact, however, the 53rd, almost leaderless except where Captain Arblaster was digging his advanced line, was at that moment discovering that Germans and not Australians were occupying the trenches on their right. Part of the 53rd started to build a sandbag barricade, either in the front line or its communications, but at 6.30 Lieutenant Pratt,<sup>145</sup> in accordance with orders, took them forward to Arblaster's advanced line, where men were urgently needed. Captain Murray<sup>146</sup> of the 53rd had, at an early stage, led forward another part of the first wave. There still remained, however, in the old German front line some of the bombers of the 53rd, who, on the extreme right of the battalion's sector, were holding back the enemy bombers. But the old German front line at the back of this small party was now practically empty, and the Germans were attacking with superior numbers. At 7.2 the staff of the 14th Brigade received by a signaller a message either from these troops or from the advanced line:

"A" Company 53rd wants reinforcements. Can't hold position unless reinforced.

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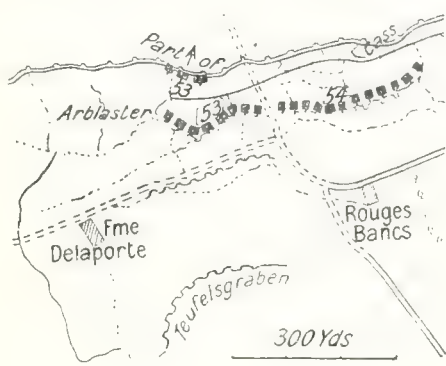
preparation for a counter-attack, and both the platoon commanders—Lieutenants J. Parker (of Lismore, N.S.W.) and A. Mitchell (of Mosman, N.S.W.)—were killed and their parties shot down. Private F. W. Raysmith, a boy of sixteen, alone reported to his company commander unwounded. (Raysmith was from Newcastle, N.S.W. He had enlisted, as did many others, by overstating his age. He continued throughout the night to carry forward urgently-needed supplies and was eventually wounded.)

<sup>145</sup> Lieut. A. E. Pratt; 53rd Bn. Clerk; of Northbridge, N.S.W.; b. Auckland, N.Z., 1894. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>146</sup> Lieut.-Col. J. J. Murray, D.S.O., M.C. Commanded (temporarily) 55th Bn., 1918. Salesman; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 26 April, 1892.



None of their own side were within sight on either flank, and the small party, which had captured twenty Germans, was itself reduced to only seven unwounded men. Its commander therefore ordered that, after throwing all its bombs, it should take its prisoners back to the Australian trenches. This was done, and with the bombers there probably withdrew any of the 60th who had reached the German line with the 53rd. It is also likely that the order to withdraw



reached other troops, for at this stage there was passed to some of the wounded in No-Man's Land and to men digging the 14th Brigade's communication trench the shouted word—"We are retiring!" Even in the Australian line Captain Gibbins<sup>147</sup> of the 55th, coming forward with his company to garrison the front trenches in place of the attacking waves, found troops retiring. "No good—you can't get up there," said their leader. "The 55th can!" was Gibbins's reply as he led his men on.

A report that the 53rd were retiring reached M'Cay at Sailly shortly after 7 p.m.; but in the German trenches Colonel Cass of the 54th, and even the rest of the 53rd, knew nothing of it, nor did the few wounded Australians and Germans who were left lying in dugouts in the abandoned sector. The fight appeared to be going well; many of the wounded, on their way to the rear, were "cock-a-hoop." The medical officers were told of "glorious victory—hundreds of prisoners—stoush<sup>148</sup> for old Fritz."<sup>149</sup> But at the front the shattered waves of the 15th Brigade were pinned down in No-Man's Land, and on the right flank of the 14th a section of the old German front line,

<sup>147</sup> Capt. N. Gibbins; 55th Bn. Bank manager; of Ipswich, Q'land; b. Ararat, Vic., 22 April, 1878. Killed in action, 20 July, 1916.

<sup>148</sup> Boxing-slang for "heavy blows."

<sup>149</sup> See an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* by the late Lieut.-Col. C. MacLaurin (of Rose Bay, N.S.W.), 26 July, 1919.

after being temporarily seized, was now lying unoccupied by either side. A hundred yards beyond, in the open fields, Captain Arblaster and the advanced flank of the 53rd, utterly ignorant of the new situation in their rear, but fending off with small bombing parties the Germans whom they knew to be in the old trenches on their right, were busily digging their new front line.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE BATTLE OF FROMELLES—*continued*

At 8 o'clock Haking understood that two-thirds of the Australian objective, from the left rightwards, had been captured. On the right of this success was a point of obscurity; but he knew that the extreme right of the 5th Division had failed. He also knew that part of the left of the 61st Division had got in, and accordingly at 7.55 ordered it to assist the right of the Australians by bombing towards them. A similar order was sent to the 14th Australian Brigade. As occasionally happened in other battles, these and some similar instructions for offensive action given by Corps headquarters to troops already violently engaged were based on a false conception of the situation, and were really dead before they issued. The small party of the 184th Brigade, which, led by the gallant Captain Church, had reached the western face of the Sugar-loaf, had disappeared. It was therefore practically certain that there were no troops of the 61st Division in the enemy's line, except on the extreme southern flank, and consequently no attempt could be made to carry out Haking's instruction. Nevertheless, in accordance with his original operation order, two of the three brigadiers of the 61st Division, upon ascertaining where their troops had failed, had forthwith initiated arrangements for renewed attacks, meanwhile applying to him for leave to throw in part of their reserves. The right brigade—182nd—of which a small force under Captain Donaldson,<sup>1</sup> 2/7th Warwickshire, had reached the enemy's support line, was now being counter-attacked, and was reinforcing in the hope of retaining its hold; the commander of the centre brigade—183rd—intended to renew his assault on the Wick Salient at 8.10; and the brigadier of the 184th, finding at 7.30 that there was now no sign of his troops in the Sugar-loaf, arranged with the headquarters of his division that the Sugar-loaf should be bombarded until 9 p.m. and then again attacked. It was therefore ordered that the assault by the 183rd upon the

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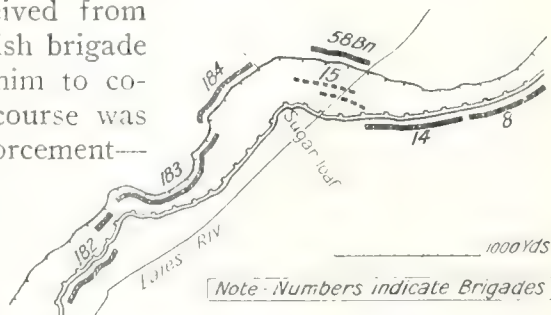
<sup>1</sup> Capt. G. B. Donaldson; 7th Bn., Royal Warwickshire Regt. Of Londonderry, Ireland; b. 1894; killed in action, 19 July, 1916. [Captain T. H. Bethell (barrister, of Coventry, Eng.) also appears to have reached the line; he, too, was killed.]

Wick should be deferred until the same hour; and, to secure assistance on the left, the commander of the 184th Brigade sent at 7.52, through the headquarters of the two divisions, the following message to the 15th Australian Brigade:

Am attacking at 9 p.m. Can your right battalion co-operate? This was received by Elliott at 8.10.

Both the 15th and 14th Australian Brigades, in consequence of urgent messages from the front for reinforcements, had at about 7.40 been authorised to employ the remaining halves of their respective "third" battalions<sup>2</sup> for strengthening their attacking troops. These half-battalions were, at the time, in the old front and reserve lines, filling the place of the troops who had advanced. M'Cay hoped that in the 15th Brigade the reinforcement would give the stationary line a "lift" from No-Man's Land into the Sugar-loaf, and in the 14th would help the 53rd and 54th to "consolidate." The troops thus used were, in their turn, to be at once replaced by half of the still intact "fourth" battalions from the reserve area.

When Elliott received from the neighbouring British brigade the telegram asking him to co-operate, his obvious course was to throw his reinforcement—half of the 58th Battalion—at 9 o'clock against the northern face of the Sugar-loaf, in front of



which the 59th Battalion was known to be held up. Orders to that effect were at 8.13 sent to the two companies of the 58th in the forward area. At the same time Elliott ordered half the 57th to come up to the "300 yards," or reserve, line, following an open track across the fields, since the communication trench previously used—V.C. Avenue—was then practically destroyed.<sup>3</sup> About this

<sup>2</sup> That is, the half which had not already been allotted for carrying parties.

<sup>3</sup> It was repaired during the night, in spite of the German barrage, by some of the 5th Pioneer Battalion under Lieut. C. R. Duke (of Orange, N.S.W., and Nelson, N.Z.). The battalion also endeavoured to repair the tramway, but the enemy fire made the latter route practically impossible. [Capt. W. J. R. Richardson (of Bulli, N.S.W.) of the 5th Pioneers had been wounded on this tramway on July 18.]



time he learned, through Major Greenway<sup>4</sup> of the engineers, who was supervising the construction of one of the projected communication trenches towards the Sugar-loaf,<sup>5</sup> that the losses of the 59th and 60th had been exceedingly heavy. The enemy had apparently located them, and was shelling the half of No-Man's Land nearest to the Australian trench. Elliott therefore asked for additional reinforcements, but these M'Cay for the present refused. The two companies of the 58th, in magnificent spirit, lined up for the assault.

But at about 8.20 p.m. Haking, on learning from his *liaison* officer<sup>6</sup> with the 61st Division the actual situation on its front, had decided that the best course was to bring back after dark all elements of the 183rd and 184th Brigades which were in advance of the British trenches, and to re-constitute its front line with the troops of the "third" battalions. He countermanded the projected 9-o'clock attack, of which information at that moment reached him. At the same time word arrived that the 182nd Brigade was being bombed out of the German line by a counter-attack. Haking therefore now decided that the whole 61st Division should be withdrawn to the British line with a view to a renewal of its attack next day. A message to this effect was issued by him at 9 o'clock, the 5th Division being at the same time asked to state exactly what part of the German line it occupied, and ordered to "endeavour to hold and consolidate" the trenches captured "on its left flank," as this would greatly assist the 61st Division's attack in the morning. At the same time M'Cay was enjoined not to use additional troops in attempting to make good the unsuccessful assault on his right, but to withdraw any isolated parties from the enemy's trenches on that flank.

The verbal order cancelling the projected 9-o'clock assault by the 183rd and 184th Brigades had been forwarded to those

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<sup>4</sup> Major H. Greenway, D.S.O. Commanded 15th Fld. Coy., Engrs., 1916/18. Mining and metallurgical engineer; of Adelaide and Melbourne; b. Sheffield, Eng., 28 Jan., 1887.

<sup>5</sup> Although the 15th Brigade had not succeeded, these trenches had been begun by the 15th Field Company. (See note on p. 445.)

<sup>6</sup> There was at this time being revived (though not yet universally adopted) a system, previously employed in 1914, by which staffs or units, when acting in association, exchanged representatives to be present at each other's headquarters during battle, in order to promote a mutual understanding and maintain connection or *liaison*.

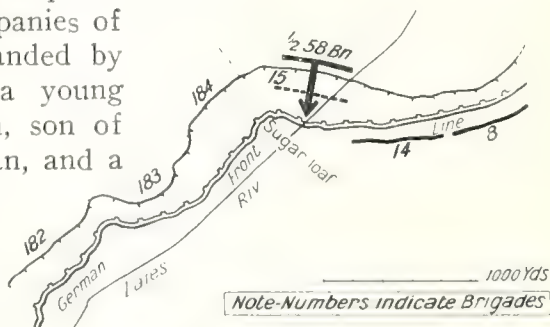
brigades by the divisional commander<sup>7</sup> at 8.30—barely in time, if his reinforcing battalions had been punctual, to prevent them from launching the attempt. Haking had not directly informed the 5th Australian Division of the cancellation,<sup>8</sup> but a message was despatched at 8.30 from the 61st Division:

Under instructions from corps commander am withdrawing from captured enemy line after dark.

This had been received at the 5th Division's Headquarters at 8.35, and it is just within the bounds of possibility that, had instant action been taken, the assault by the 15th Brigade at 9 o'clock might have been stopped. Had the several brigades, as in later battles, been in direct communication with each other and maintained *liaison* officers at each other's headquarters, this would certainly have been the result. But apparently there was a failure at the headquarters of the 5th Australian Division to grasp either the meaning of the message or the importance of sending it on to General Elliott. Thus it was not until Haking's order was received at 9.10 p.m. that the information was forwarded by M'Cay to the 15th Brigade as follows:

9.25 p.m. 61st Division not attacking to-night. General Elliott may withdraw 59th Battalion and its reinforcements if he thinks attack is not likely to succeed.

By then night was closing in, and in the failing twilight there had already gone forward, punctually to the minute, one of the bravest and most hopeless assaults ever undertaken by the Australian Imperial Force. The two companies of the 58th were commanded by Major Hutchinson,<sup>9</sup> a young graduate of Duntroon, son of a Tasmanian clergyman, and a boy of the finest type that his country produces. Before the actual order to advance, the men—as



<sup>7</sup> Major-Gen. C. J. Mackenzie.

<sup>8</sup> Probably he was unaware that it had been asked to co-operate.

<sup>9</sup> Major A. J. S. Hutchinson; 58th Bn. Duntroon graduate; of Hamilton, Tas.; b. Wodonga, Vic., 25 Aug., 1894. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

was often the case with Australians, especially when first in action—could be felt straining like greyhounds on the leash, and were not easily restrained from anticipating the word of command. On its being given, they went forward with splendid dash opposite the Sugar-loaf, carrying with them a number of survivors of the 59th, until, when they were two-thirds of the way across No-Man's Land, there was opened from the salient a fire of machine-guns so severe that the line was shattered and the men dazed. The survivors obtained slight cover in a ditch. As they lay there, with the terrifying din of the machine-gun bullets cracking overhead, Hutchinson, apparently in an endeavour to lift the wave farther, went on himself, alone, and fell riddled by bullets close to the German wire.<sup>10</sup> The two companies of the 58th which made the attack were practically annihilated.<sup>11</sup> More than two years later, on the day of the armistice which ended the struggle on the Western Front, this area, then recently captured by the British, was visited by an Australian:

We found the old No-Man's Land simply full of our dead (he wrote). In the narrow sector west of the Laies River and east of the Sugar-loaf Salient, the skulls and bones and torn uniforms were lying about everywhere. I found a bit of Australian kit lying fifty yards from the corner of the salient, and the bones of an Australian officer and several men within 100 yards of it. Farther round, immediately on their flank, were a few British—you could tell them by their leather equipment. And within 100 yards of the west corner of the Sugar-loaf Salient there was lying a small party of English too—also with an officer—you could tell the cloth of his coat.

Since the war a few scattered traces of dead of the 15th Brigade have been found on or near the parapet of the Sugar-loaf, only two, Sergeant Leech<sup>12</sup> of the 58th and Private Aitken<sup>13</sup> of the 59th, being identifiable. After the fight the Germans placed on their parapet at this point the bodies of several Australians; these may have been picked up in front

<sup>10</sup> Hutchinson's batman, Private Lyons (of Horsham, Vic.), made an attempt to bring him back, but was shot.

<sup>11</sup> Lieuts. A. E. R. Barnfather (of Geelong, Vic.), C. M. Gray (of East Melbourne), and G. N. Scott (of Kew, Vic.), of the 58th, were all killed in this charge.

<sup>12</sup> Sgt. W. Leech (No. 3164; 58th Bn.). Bank accountant; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Kerang, Vic., 23 Jan., 1892. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>13</sup> Pte. T. Aitken (No. 3003; 59th Bn.). Farmer; of Moondarra, Vic.; b. Edinburgh, Scotland, Sept., 1881. Killed in action, 19 July, 1916.

of the trenches, as were their only Australian prisoners in this sector, Lieutenant Bowden<sup>14</sup> and Private Hodson<sup>15</sup> of the 59th, both dangerously wounded. It therefore appears certain that no part of the enemy's line was captured, even if it was entered, by the 15th Brigade in this battle.

While the attack by the 59th was proceeding, M'Cay—although both the 8th and 14th Brigades had by then been heavily counter-attacked—was able to inform Haking that he held the enemy's line continuously along their front. But the difficulty of retaining his hold, if the Sugar-loaf was to remain unsubdued, was manifest, since the German machine-guns in that salient swept the whole of No-Man's Land and actually fired into the rear of the position captured by the Australians. At this juncture Haking learned from a contact aeroplane, sent out at 9 o'clock, that flares had been seen at the apex and southern face of the Sugar-loaf and also in the German front line due north of Delaporte Farm. It may now be conjectured that they were fired by Germans opposing the 15th and 14th Brigades; but at the time it was assumed that they were burnt by the attacking infantry, and that part of the 184th Brigade must still be in the Sugar-loaf. Haking therefore altered his previous decision. At 10 o'clock his chief-of-staff, Brigadier-General Anderson,<sup>16</sup> was sent to M'Cay, and at a conference at which Lieutenant-Colonel Wagstaff, the chief of M'Cay's staff, was also present an arrangement was effected by which the 5th Australian Division would maintain its hold upon the captured trenches, while the 61st Division would, before dawn, endeavour to seize the Sugar-loaf. M'Cay pointed out that his right was being heavily pressed, and asked for leave to employ—should he desire to do so—half of each of his last three reserve battalions. This was agreed to. M'Cay, who had already sent forward—for works of repair behind the Australian line and for trench-digging in No-Man's Land—half of the 5th

<sup>14</sup> Lieut. J. C. Bowden; 59th Bn. Bank manager; of South Yarra and Kyabram, Vic.; b. South Yarra, 22 Sept., 1880. Died of wounds, 19 July, 1916.

<sup>15</sup> Pte. H. H. V. Hodson (No. 3990; 59th Bn.). Bricklayer; of Camberwell, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 17 Feb., 1897. Died 22 July, 1926.

<sup>16</sup> Lieut.-Gen. Sir W. H. Anderson, K.C.B., p.s.c. Chief of Staff, XI Corps, 1915/16; XV Corps, 1916/17; First Army, 1917/19. Officer of British Regular Army; of East Lothian, Scotland; b. Aldershot, Eng., 9 Jan., 1872.



Pioneers, at 11.40 gave his brigadiers half of the 29th, 56th, and 57th Battalions,<sup>17</sup> directing that the old line should be held by the remaining halves, and adding—"you are asked to take and hold the whole of the original objectives."<sup>18</sup> At the same time Haking ordered the 61st Division to attack the Sugar-loaf salient during the dark.

M'Cay was still without any definite information of the position of the 15th Brigade's front. At 10.30 he asked for this, informed Elliott of the intended night attack upon the Sugar-loaf, and inquired—

Can you seize and hold all your objective if I give you your reserve battalion?

Elliott himself was almost equally in the dark; he still believed that part of the 60th Battalion was in the German trench, though not in touch with the 14th Brigade; and the fate of the two companies of the 58th was still unknown, although rumours were reaching him that the 59th, which had joined in their attack, was still 100 yards short of the German trench. His reply, sent at 11.30, was:

G.O.C. . . . cannot guarantee success of attack with 57th Battalion as enemy machine-gun fire is very hot, but is willing to try.

At 12.30 he received, and immediately passed on to M'Cay, a message from Major Denehy<sup>19</sup> of the 58th containing the full truth:

Such men of the 60th as actually reached enemy's trenches have been killed or captured. The two companies of 58th mown down when close to enemy's trench and very few came back.<sup>20</sup> Men of all battalions are coming back from No-Man's Land and I expect that they will gradually drift back to the line. Many men are wounded, many are not. Very many officers are casualties, including Majors McCrae, Elliott, and Hutchinson, all of whom are reported dead, and seems impossible to organise. . . . Report seems unanimous that

<sup>17</sup> The 8th Brigade had at that hour already received the whole of the 30th (*see p. 401*), and the 14th and 15th Brigades the whole of the 55th and 58th respectively (*see pp. 403 and 392*). Each brigade would thus have three battalions for fighting, half a battalion for "carrying and digging," and half a battalion for holding the line. The 14th Brigade either did not receive this order or did not take advantage of it, for part of the 56th Battalion remained unused in the "300 yards line."

<sup>18</sup> The order concluded as follows: "You will, however, avoid the error often committed in France of holding captured trenches too thickly. . . . The Corps Commander and I congratulate you on splendid work done."

<sup>19</sup> Lieut.-Col. C. A. Denehy, D.S.O. Commanded 58th Bn., 1916-18; 57th Bn., 1918/19. School teacher; of Rutherglen and Caulfield, Vic.; b. 15 Oct., 1879.

<sup>20</sup> The first two sentences are a summary given by Elliott; the literal quotation from Denehy's message begins at this point.

not a single man of 15th Brigade has now arrived in enemy's trench, as enemy's flares are coming from the whole of the front allotted to this brigade. I am now organising the defence of our original trenches. . . .

Elliott added: "The message indicates that the attack of this brigade has completely failed." M'Cay at once telephoned to Haking that the 15th Brigade was "of no further use for attack." He ordered the artillery to lay its fire upon the enemy's trench which he had previously supposed to be occupied by the 60th Battalion, and thus protect the flank of the 14th Brigade. He also instructed Elliott to abandon the attack, organise the defence of his original line, and endeavour to push out a trench across No-Man's Land to connect with the flank of the 14th Brigade. "It is vital to the 14th," he added. The 57th Battalion took charge of the front of the brigade, and the bringing in of the wounded from No-Man's Land began. The digging of two communication trenches, most gallantly undertaken by the 15th Field Company and some of the 58th Battalion under the direction of Major Greenway and Lieutenant Noedl,<sup>21</sup> was abandoned,<sup>22</sup> and Lieutenant Evans<sup>23</sup> made a hurried survey to locate the flank of the 14th Brigade, in order that a sap might be dug towards it. The task was, however, almost impossible, since the 14th Brigade itself, as will shortly be seen, was not aware of the precise position. All offensive action by the 15th Brigade thus came to an end.

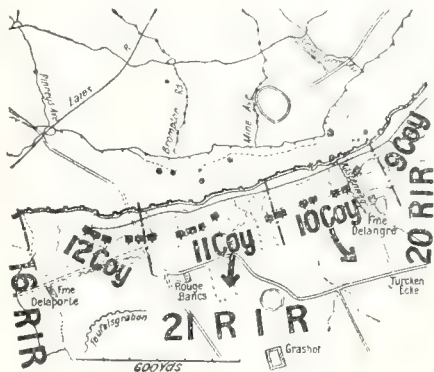
Meanwhile the centre and left brigades had held their ground after heavy fighting. About 8.30, when the daylight was fading, it became evident that a counter-attack was imminent against the 32nd Battalion holding the left flank. The enemy was shelling its positions heavily, and bombing had begun.

<sup>21</sup> Capt. L. Noedl, D.S.O., M.C.; 7th Field Coy., Engrs. Electrical engineer; of Sydney; b. Woodville, Hawkes Bay, N.Z., 16 Aug., 1887.

<sup>22</sup> Lieut. Noedl was severely wounded, but continued to direct until relieved at 9 o'clock by Lieut. E. J. K. McCloughry (of North Adelaide). Lieuts. S. R. Mallarky (of Wollstonecraft, N.S.W.) and F. C. Dawson (58th Bn.; of St. Kilda, Vic) worked with Major Greenway on the other trench. (McCloughry afterwards transferred to the Australian Flying Corps—see Vol. VIII.)

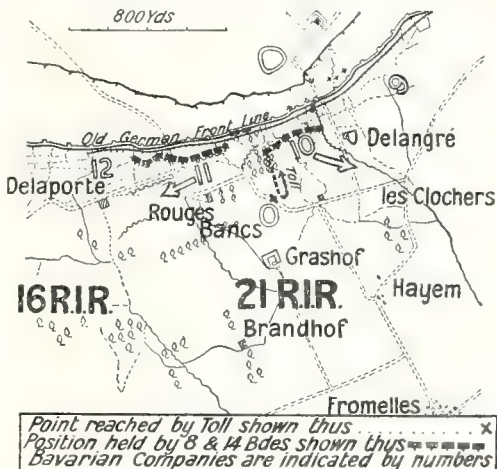
<sup>23</sup> Capt. S. E. Evans, M.C.; 1st Army Troops Coy., Engrs. Civil engineer; of Guildford, W. Aust.; b. Summer Hill, N.S.W., 18 May, 1892.

The enemy's troops who could be seen gathering about Delangré Farm were his immediate reserves, which had been warned earlier in the day. The attack of the 8th and 14th Brigades had fallen on part of the III/21st Bavarian R.I.R., which held the front from Ferme du Mouquet<sup>24</sup> to Rouges Bancs with its 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Companies, in that order from east to west. The assault of the 8th Brigade had struck the 10th Company, and that of the 14th, the 11th, and part of the 12th. The 10th and 11th Companies were broken—killed, captured, or scattered; but a remnant of the 10th, falling back upon the Kastenweg and Delangré Farm, and supported by the 9th Company in the next sector and by the nearest company of the 20th Regiment from the area beyond, had barricaded the Kastenweg near Delangré. The scattered enemy received the impression that the advance went much deeper than was actually the case. Bavarian accounts and maps represent it as penetrating half-way to Fromelles, and until 10.20 the divisional staff seems to have feared that some of the strong-points on the flats immediately below that village might have been captured.<sup>25</sup>



<sup>24</sup> To be distinguished from the famous farm of the same name on the Somme battlefield.

<sup>25</sup> The fire of British "heavies" on the roads behind the Aubers-Fromelles ridge prevented the staff of the 17th Regiment from reaching its battle-headquarters in Aubers until after the action had been in progress for some time. Similar disturbance of normal arrangements probably occurred elsewhere and, combined with exaggerated reports from fleeing troops, gave an erroneous impression. The historian of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R. states that the Australians advanced up the Kastenweg, as far as "the rise near Delangré Farm" (apparently known to the Germans as "Dead Sow Farm"), and that, farther to the south-west, they reached "the neighbourhood of the Hofgarten and the Grashof (south-west of Hayem and Les Clochers respectively), and even to within 200 yards of the "Brandhof" (a farm half-way to the Fromelles ridge). This would mean that in the centre some of the troops penetrated half-a-mile; and, inasmuch as a few Australians returned saying that they had wandered this distance, the report is possibly true of some small party. It is certain that no large body penetrated half that distance. The same account adds that the advance was prevented from further extension by the fire of the German artillery, and by well-directed machine-gun and rifle fire from "the Dead Sow (Delangré), Schmitzhof (possibly Les Clochers), the left flank of the strong-point Türcken Ecke, and the Brandhof." At 10.20 the intelligence officer of the division noted: "Brandhof is in our possession; the enemy is not in possession of Grashof."





There had been drawn to the front the following reserves:—To strengthen the garrison on the east flank of the attack, the support company of the 20th Bavarian R.I.R.; to block the Kastenweg, the company of the 21st stationed as regimental reserve at Beaucamps (about three miles distant); to counter-attack from the direction of Les Clochers, the two nearest companies of the brigade reserve, which had been standing to arms since 5.45 in Ligny (three and a half miles distant); to keep touch with and support the 16th Regiment on the other flank of the attack, another company of the 21st at "Brandhof," 600 yards in front of the Australian centre and right. Finally, on the western flank of the Australian assault, the 16th Regiment had been ordered to counter-attack together with the 12th company of the 21st and a remnant of its 11th.

The counter-attack by these forces<sup>26</sup> was made about dusk, and fell chiefly upon the 32nd Battalion on the Australian left. The Germans appear to have attacked in the Kastenweg without success, but their fire from this flank enfiladed the advanced line of the 31st and 32nd, and casualties were heavy. Several of the Vickers machine-guns in the front line, including that nearest to the Kastenweg, lost all their crews.<sup>27</sup> Recognising the extreme importance of the flank-positions, the men of the 32nd passed along the word for skilled gunners to man the Kastenweg gun, and Privates Marks<sup>28</sup> and Russell,<sup>29</sup> who had lost their own sections, made their way thither and set it up on the edge of a ditch or shell-hole beside the ramp of the communication trench.

The artillery endeavoured to assist the troops on this flank, but was at once faced with a situation of peculiar difficulty. When, at 7.40, the 32nd Battalion first reported serious pressure on its left, the corresponding group of Australian field-guns and howitzers at once increased its rate of fire; but from the first the infantry, especially on this flank, had sent back many urgent reports that shells from their own guns were still falling upon them and, on the left, actually striking the old German front line, now in rear of

<sup>26</sup> It is assumed that the units ordered up for the counter-attack were present; no information is available showing the hour at which each of them arrived at the front.

<sup>27</sup> The machine-gunners had come under very heavy fire when advancing to the captured position. Lieut. F. R. Sheppard (of Beaudesert, Q'land), in charge of two guns, had been wounded by a shell of his own side before crossing No-Man's Land.

<sup>28</sup> Pte. C. B. Marks (No. 111A: 8th M.G. Coy.). Draughtsman; of Toowoomba, Q'land; b. Toowoomba, 9 Aug., 1893.

<sup>29</sup> Sgt. L. C. Eglese (served as W. Russell; No. 121, 8th M.G. Coy.). Clerk; of Double Bay, N.S.W.; b. Double Bay, 10 Sept., 1889. Killed in action, 26 Sept., 1917.



the troops. By 7 o'clock M'Cay had ordered both the left and centre groups of field artillery to increase their range by 200 yards; as complaints continued to come from the 32nd Battalion, the range on that flank was lifted by further stages until, at 7.50, it had actually been lengthened by 500 yards. As the complaint was still repeated, M'Cay asked the 8th Brigade to make sure that the firing was not from the enemy. The main curtain of the Australian shells on this flank must now have lain far back on the enemy's area near Les Clochers.<sup>30</sup> By 8.15 it was noted that the complaints of short shooting had, for the time being, ceased; but the artillery could now give little assistance. At 8.30 the 32nd reported that the enemy's artillery was still falling heavily, and at 9.40:

Front line cannot be held unless strong reinforcements are sent. Enemy's machine-gunners are creeping up. No star shells.<sup>31</sup> The artillery is not giving support. Sandbags required in thousands. Men bringing sandbags are being wounded in the back. Water urgently required.

General Tivey, who at first, having been refused further reinforcements, could only tell the 32nd to hold its trenches "at any cost," had at this stage been authorised by M'Cay to use the unallotted portion of his "third" battalion, the 30th (New South Wales), then on duty in the old front line; half of the brigade's "fourth" battalion, the 29th (Victoria), was at the same time made available to replace it.

Actually, however, the last company of the 30th had before this been drawn upon for reinforcements and for carrying parties, which, as they went forward, had become absorbed into the struggle in spite of orders to the contrary. Thus Captain Krinks<sup>32</sup> of the 30th, reaching the front line with a carrying party, had found the situation on the left highly critical, and took some of his men to the extreme flank to help man the post in the Kastenweg. Entering that avenue, they strengthened the barrier by pulling down into the fairway some of the ammunition-boxes of which the

<sup>30</sup> It was reported at 8.10 that the guns which were shelling le Mouquet Farm were firing on the Australian infantry; these guns were those of the 24th British R.F.A. Brigade.

<sup>31</sup> Probably "flares" were meant. It must be remembered that the battalion was quite new to the Western Front.

<sup>32</sup> Major F. L. Krinks, M.C.; 32nd Bn. Furniture warehouseman; of Hurstville, N.S.W.; b. Newtown, N.S.W., 1 June, 1894.

trench-walls were made. The German bomb-attack, however, was at this juncture too hot to permit of resistance in the trench, and therefore Krinks, a hardened and determined young officer, took his men into the open east of the Kastenweg, and, from shell-holes about twenty yards beyond, kept up a sniping fire on any German who showed himself. The ground on which Delangré Farm and this portion of the Kastenweg were situated was a slight rise, and the Germans, in order to bomb, or fire at, the Australians west of the trench, had to expose themselves to the rifles of Krinks's small post. Recognising that machine-gun fire would be highly effective from his position, Krinks made his way back to his colonel in the Australian line and returned with two Lewis guns through the Kastenweg to his post in the shell-holes.

Meanwhile other parts of the 30th had come forward, and a platoon under Lieutenant Barbour<sup>33</sup> occupied part of the long straggling ditch or trench which connected the advanced posts of the 32nd and 31st, and in which he had on arrival found only scattered groups of dead and wounded men. Conceiving that he could best help by collecting a dump of ammunition, Barbour began to gather it from all sources, especially from the dead and wounded. The two machine-guns in that part of the line under Lieutenant Winn<sup>34</sup> were assisted with ammunition from this slender store, which, however, was mainly used to maintain some sort of supply for the posts on the left.

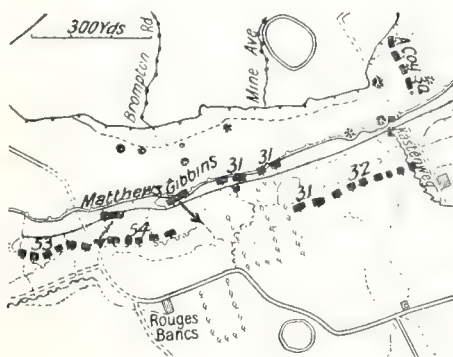
By such means the first German counter-stroke was defeated. A Bavarian writer, explaining its repulse, states:<sup>35</sup> "The effective barrier of fire laid down by the enemy's artillery, and by machine-guns which he had carried forward, the onset of the dark, and heavy losses brought the counter-attack to a stop." The parties holding the main front of the 8th and 14th Brigades were not affected by it, but continued to dig along their drains, building up a breastwork and, in some parts, carving out above the water-level a ledge on which they could sit or stand.

<sup>33</sup> Capt. T. C. Barbour; 30th Bn. Architect; of Melbourne; b. Hawthorn, Vic., 21 July, 1879.

<sup>34</sup> Capt. F. C. Winn, 8th M.G. Coy. Mercer; of Newcastle, N.S.W.; b. Mayfield, N.S.W., 12 Feb., 1891.

<sup>35</sup> *History of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R.*, p. 50.

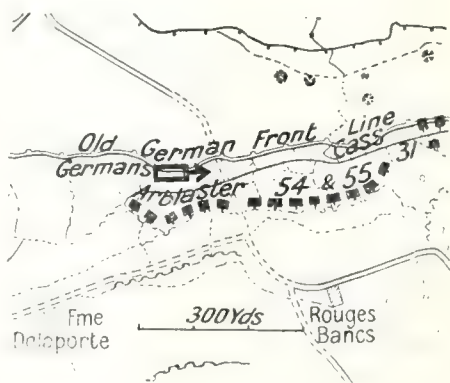
For this task at 9.30 the 14th Brigade received a most valuable reinforcement in the shape of the half-battalion (55th) made available by General M'Cay. Of this, one company under Captain Gibbins was sent by Cass to the left of the 54th, and the other under Lieutenant Matthews<sup>36</sup> to the left of the 53rd. They found already there the personnel of most of the carrying parties into which the other half of their battalion had been divided, and, with the two companies now added, the front line of the 14th Brigade became fairly continuous; but the gap between its left and the right of the 8th Brigade's advanced line remained almost as wide as before.



On the extreme right of the 14th Brigade the counter-attack by the enemy's immediate reserves was felt, though not as heavily as on the extreme left. The right battalion of that brigade, the 53rd, while endeavouring to dig the new front line, had to fend off with bombs and rifle-fire the enemy occupying the trenches of its flank. Near the right the open road from Rouges Bancs farm ran through the advanced line, causing a gap in the defences and marking, as it happened, the point of division between the 54th and 53rd, some of whose posts were in sight of one another in the comparatively straight sections of trench on their respective sides of the road. From the country beyond there entered this trench, seventy yards on either side of the road, two communication saps, constituting with the road itself three weak points in the defences of the right flank. When consolidation was beginning, Captain Arblaster—who in spite of his youth was showing himself a cool and resourceful commander—had asked his junior, Captain Murray, to ensure the

<sup>36</sup> Capt. J. H. Matthews, 55th Bn. Bank clerk; of Cootamundra, N.S.W.; b. Cootamundra, 13 April, 1893.

safety of this part of the line while he himself grappled with the more anxious situation on the extreme right. Consequently the more westerly trench-junction was garrisoned by Murray with Lieutenant Pratt and a dozen men, the more easterly, being in the sector of the 54th, by Lieutenant Lovejoy<sup>37</sup> with some Lewis guns of that battalion under Lieutenant Downing;<sup>38</sup> the road-crossing by Lieutenant Gunter,<sup>39</sup> who, in response to a request from Murray, had been ordered by Cass to organise the bombing defences on the right and thenceforward took charge of the crossing. The enemy counter-attack, however, did not fall upon these posts, and even the extreme right flank of the advanced line was as this stage held without any great effort; but in the old German front line, though neither Cass nor the 53rd were yet aware of the fact, no flank defence had existed since the withdrawal of the right of the 53rd,<sup>40</sup> and the trench, as has been already stated,<sup>41</sup> for a time lay empty. After an interval, however, the German bombers, perceiving that opposition had been subdued, began to make their way along it, shooting ahead of them flare after flare—like the brilliant white stars of a "Roman-candle" fire-work—and throwing grenades as they went. A few wounded Australians, left in dugouts in that sector, found themselves prisoners.<sup>42</sup> The enemy's bombers presently reached a communication trench in which Arblaster



<sup>37</sup> Capt. H. R. Lovejoy; 54th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Belmore, N.S.W.; b. Herne Hill, London, 19 July, 1882.

<sup>38</sup> Capt. R. G. Downing, M.C.; 54th Bn. Agricultural student; of Ashfield, N.S.W.; b. Forest Lodge, N.S.W., 24 May, 1891.

<sup>39</sup> Capt. A. C. Gunter, M.C.; 54th Bn. Bank clerk; of Bondi, N.S.W.; b. Tamworth, N.S.W., 14 Nov., 1894.

<sup>40</sup> See p. 389.

<sup>41</sup> See p. 390.

<sup>42</sup> At 11.15 the intelligence officer of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division informed army headquarters: "The prisoners are nearly all of the 61st Division. One of them is of 5th Australian Division."



had stationed Lieutenant Farmer<sup>43</sup> and thirty men of the 55th with orders to clean and improve it so as to afford safe communication with his advanced line, another party being ordered to dig back from the advanced line towards it. Before Farmer's party began its work, the flares rising from the old front line had been noted, and by their light could be seen in the trench-bays the spiked helmets of Bavarian infantry. The Australian working party was no sooner in position than German bombs began to rain upon that end of the communication trench. Farmer at once called for men experienced with bombs, and two of his party responded, but discovered that the bombs given to them had not been fused. Farmer thereupon set to work himself to fuse the grenades, and the enemy was thus for a time kept at bay. Meanwhile Arblaster, recognising that the right flank was in serious danger of being cut off, called constantly for volunteers to bomb these Germans back. The appeal went several times along the front of the brigade, and, wherever men could be spared, they were sent off to the right, where the sound of bombing and fighting was now continuous. For one of these efforts Lance-Corporal Freirat,<sup>44</sup> Private Mitchell,<sup>45</sup> and five others came forward, and, being supplied with twenty bombs apiece, crawled unobserved over the open into shell-holes from which, facing towards the Australian rear, they began to throw their grenades into the position occupied by the German bombers. Shouts and groans from the trench, and the blowing of horns—the German call for stretcher-bearers—showed that the bursts were having effect. Desperate fighting ensued, the Germans endeavouring to locate the Australian bombers by firing flares in their direction, and at the same time sweeping the area with machine-gun fire. The Germans could not be reduced, and when, after an hour's heavy fighting, the bomb-supply failed, Arblaster drew his bombers back into his advanced line. The digging party had been scattered by the burst of the enemy's grenades, some taking refuge in shell-holes outside the trench, where the Germans eventually

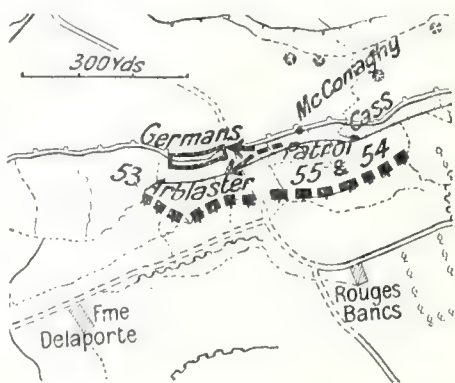
<sup>43</sup> Lieut. E. M. Farmer; 55th Bn. Draughtsman; of Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.; b. St. Albans, N.S.W., 17 July, 1888.

<sup>44</sup> L/Cpl. P. Freirat (No. 1398; 53rd Bn.). Boilermaker; of Sydney; b. Kalmar, Sweden, 1887.

<sup>45</sup> Pte. C. A. Mitchell (No. 2734; 53rd Bn.). Grocer; of Rockdale, N.S.W.; b. Woodbong, Casino, N.S.W., 9 Feb., 1900.

saw them and bombed them further. To avoid heavier casualties, the section of the communication trench nearest to the German front line was eventually evacuated.

The right flank of the Australians in the enemy's trench was thus, early in the night, partly cut off by the Germans thrusting along their old front line. Colonel Cass, whose headquarters was only 200 yards farther east, was entirely unaware of this; but Lieutenant-Colonel McConaghy of the 55th, who at 10.10 took forward his staff into the enemy's trench on Cass's right, at once received the impression that matters were far from well. He was a tall, care-free young Irish-Australian<sup>46</sup> who had lived through the thick of the battles of the Landing and Lone Pine, and finding his battalion now all committed to the fight, he had no intention of being left out of it, or of simply handing over his beloved unit to the control of others. Crossing No-Man's Land at the middle of the 14th Brigade's sector, where the 14th Field Company had half-finished its communication trench, he and his second-in-command, Major Cowey, also a veteran of the Landing, found near the right of the sap-head two young officers of the 53rd, who, when questioned, proved to have no knowledge of their battalion's position. Hearing that the 53rd had lost almost all its officers, McConaghy and Cowey at once pushed to the right front and found Arblaster's section of the 53rd hard-pressed and much concerned about the position farther west, where the 60th Battalion was supposed to be. McConaghy sent an officer and three men along the old German front line to discover whether any of the 15th Brigade were on that flank. Neither officer nor men returned. A second patrol, under Corporal Anson,<sup>47</sup> was driven back by



<sup>46</sup> See his portrait in the Lone Pine trenches—*Vol. II*, at p. 509.

<sup>47</sup> C.S.M. H. Anson, D.C.M. (No. 1701; 55th Bn.). Bushman; b. Swan Hill, Vic., Aug., 1889.

bombs. Thinking that these might come from some isolated German post, Anson went out again, this time moving across the open; but he found that the enemy were holding the line continuously for some distance to the right of the 53rd. Whether or no Elliott's brigade held any trenches beyond that again, it was immediately evident to these officers with their Gallipoli experience that the trenches on their immediate right must be forthwith barricaded, and two "blocks," or bomb-stops, were accordingly built by hurriedly pulling down sandbags from both sides of the trench. Bombers and snipers were then stationed there to prevent the enemy's further progress. These measures, together with the resistance of the Australian advanced line and the exhaustion of the enemy's local reserves, seem about 11 o'clock to have brought the first heavy counter-attack on the right flank temporarily to a close.

The work of converting the front-line ditches into a defensible breastwork was meanwhile progressing almost better than could have been hoped. The need for protection was obvious, and the men worked well, though, as night wore on, their fatigue began to tell and they had to be stirred to complete the task. Along the front, though in some sectors fitfully shelled, they were not interfered with by counter-attack. The position was lit by the flares constantly thrown from the right flank—a proceeding which puzzled many of the leaders who were not aware of the situation there. The chief difficulty in consolidation was that of obtaining sandbags, picks, and shovels. The posts were also without flares and flare-pistols, the mistake having been made of apportioning these to the officers, of whom two-thirds had been killed or wounded before reaching the position. Use was made of the German flares and bombs, but the shortage was acute, since the parties which should have carried additional instalments of these supplies had, in most cases, been absorbed into the fighting, and officers in charge of the dumps had much difficulty in finding the necessary carriers. In the sector of the 14th Brigade the position was greatly improved when at midnight the engineers, in spite of constant interruption,

succeeded in connecting their communication trench through No-Man's Land with the old German front line, rendering communication safer and easier.

Furthermore, for about a quarter of an hour the signallers of the 54th succeeded in maintaining an unbroken telephone-line across No-Man's Land, and Lieutenants Robinson and Giblett<sup>48</sup> of the 55th in the German trench were able to inform Captain Street, of the brigade staff, and Lieutenant Palmer precisely what stores were then required. As both Colonel Cass's and Colonel McConaghy's headquarters were near the point where this trench entered the German line, such stores as came through it were naturally directed to parts of the 14th Brigade front, as to which both Cass and McConaghy were constantly informed by their junior officers in charge of the several posts. On its left was Captain Gibbins—six feet four inches in his boots, a gaunt, brave, humorous, cool-headed Australian, bank manager in civil life, older than most company officers, but an athlete, promoted from the ranks at Anzac. He had brought up one of the reinforcing companies of the 55th, and, as his first step, reported the situation to Colonel McConaghy:

We hold front line with 54th. C.O. 54th (Cass) in next trench in rear. 53rd on our right. 31st and 32nd on our left. Consolidating positions as fast as possible. Sending back to rear trench by parties of ten under N.C.O's for ammunition and sandbags. We want Very pistols, flares, and sandbags (plenty). Have 54th Lewis guns and five of our own under Sergeant Colless<sup>49</sup> for counter-attack. Each of my men have three bombs, but require more. Expect a counter-attack shortly. Anyway, we can hold them easily.

N. GIBBINS, Capt.,

O.C. "B" Company.

Sergeant Colless doing good work—my officers also of course. Would like you to say something to this man (*i.e.*, the bearer of the message). He is doing splendid work.

Throughout the night Gibbins wisely continued to send back under trusted N.C.O's small carrying parties of his own men, who acutely realised the need of their comrades. From

<sup>48</sup> Capt. W. N. Giblett, M.C.; 55th Bn. Grocer; of Thornleigh, N.S.W.; b. Surry Hills, N.S.W., 10 Sept., 1892.

<sup>49</sup> Lieut. S. Colless, M.C., D.C.M.; 55th Bn. Wool classer; of Penrith, N.S.W.; b. Penrith, 19 Nov., 1892. Killed in action, 1 Sept., 1918.



the centre of the 14th Brigade's front line, on Gibbins's right, Lieutenant Harris<sup>50</sup> of the 54th wrote to Colonel Cass:

12.55 a.m. 53rd have asked for reinforcements (to put where they link with us). I have sent them about fifty men earlier in the evening. Can't spare another man from our firing line. Are there any men available from the rear? Still going strong. Cigarettes and matches at a premium.

W. D. HARRIS, Lieut.

1.35 a.m. We now have bullet-proof parapet (five to nine feet high) all along our line. Now traversing. Lewis gun ammunition is wanted. Feel confident we can hold against all but H.E. (high explosive) shells.

W. D. HARRIS, Lieut.

How about communication trenches—are we to start them?

W. D. H.

A short section of the front was actually floored with material improvised by an engineer officer, Lieutenant Merkel.<sup>51</sup> At the point on the right front where the road from Rouges Bancs passed through the old support trenches, Gunter and his men had made a shallow breastwork across the opening, and a similar gap in the defences farther in rear was closed by a party under Sergeant Bates<sup>52</sup> and Corporal Mealey<sup>53</sup> of the 54th, the positions of the 53rd and 54th Battalions being thereby connected.

In the lines of the 8th Brigade the situation was not so satisfactory. The available companies of the 30th Battalion had all gone forward—mostly as fatigue parties, which had been almost entirely absorbed in the fighting. Major Purser of the 30th, who was charged with the duty of sending forward the parties, was at his wits' end to provide more carriers, and Lieutenant-Colonel Clark<sup>54</sup> of the 30th at 10.10 reported:

All my men who have gone forward with ammunition have not returned. I have not even one section left.

<sup>50</sup> Capt. W. D. Harris, M.C.; 54th Bn. Stock and station agent; of Barraba, N.S.W.; b. Wodonga, Vic., 16 Nov., 1883.

<sup>51</sup> Capt. L. G. Merkel, M.C. G.S.O. (3), 5th Aust. Div., 1918/19. Engineer; of Rushworth, Vic.; b. Brighton, Vic., 25 March, 1891. Died 8 Aug., 1922.

<sup>52</sup> Lieut. A. G. Bates, M.C., D.C.M.; 54th Bn. Driver; of Crookwell, N.S.W.; b. Crookwell, 6 April, 1892.

<sup>53</sup> C.S.M. P. Mealey, M.M. (No. 4266; 54th Bn.). Cold storage employee; of South Kensington, N.S.W.; b. Black Springs, N.S.W., 1885. Killed in action, 15 May, 1917.

<sup>54</sup> Col. J. W. Clark, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 30th Bn., 1915/18. Shipping merchant; of Waratah and Killara, N.S.W.; b. Newcastle, 7 Sept., 1877.

On that flank the difficulty was much increased by the fact that the communication trench, which was to have been provided by a company of the 30th blowing a "pipe-pusher" across No-Man's Land from the Cordonnerie Salient, had not been begun. That corner was the most heavily shelled in the whole area; the arrangements had miscarried, and the company allotted for the task had at an early stage been diverted as carrying parties for the fighting troops. The enemy's shell-fire falling heavily on the old No-Man's Land rendered its passage everywhere highly dangerous,<sup>55</sup> and, to protect the carriers against the deadly enfilade of machine-guns to which this flank in particular was subjected, they were directed to cross by the new fire trench which was in process of excavation on the extreme flank.

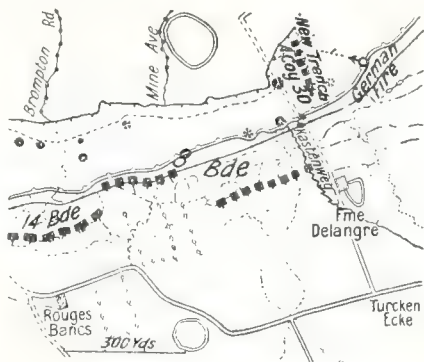
In spite of the extreme risk, work on this trench had gone steadily forward. Captain Allen, who, though wounded before the attack commenced, was still in charge, had discovered, at some distance to the right in the Australian entanglement, an opening upon which the German machine-gun was not playing. Through this he passed another working party, with orders to make contact with the men digging on the far side, and thence to construct a sandbag barrier to meet the one which he and the engineers were pushing forward through the Australian wire.<sup>56</sup> A corporal and some men whom he sent to the old German front line with orders to suppress the machine-gun were not successful; but, in spite of this, the separate sections of the trench, though shallow, were gradually linked up except near the old German line, where, most of the diggers having been shot, it remained merely a series of

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<sup>55</sup> This may be illustrated by the experience of Col. Coghill of the 32nd, who on endeavouring, under the guidance of Lieut. Barbour and a runner, to report back across No-Man's Land, after several times crawling through wire-entanglements, saw a parapet ahead, and, making for it, found himself and his companions in the same trench which they had left. Coghill shortly afterwards succeeded in making the journey by himself. Of the dangerous task of the runners, who had to cross No-Man's Land, often more than once, with messages, a single instance may be given. A man of the 30th, P. J. Nankivell (of Rydalmere, N.S.W.), was sent across, but did not return. Later, the officer who sent him, returning to the Australian line, heard his name feebly called, and, on searching in the direction of the voice, found Nankivell (as he wrote afterwards) "amongst the débris (of the trench) . . . a mass of shrapnel wounds in body and legs—I could see portions of the shell sticking out. To my surprise he made no mention of his terrible condition, but was anxious to let me know he had delivered his message. . . . It appears that he had been 'cracked' coming across near the sap, but had managed to crawl in and deliver his message."

<sup>56</sup> See p. 386.

potholes. The enemy was shelling it constantly from the north-east, breaking in some portions of the trench. The casualties among parties attempting to cross were severe, and, although quantities of sandbags and grenades were sent forward into the trench, only part of them got through, and the men of the 30th Battalion and 8th Field Company attempting to dig it were hampered almost past endurance by the slow congested



passage of men with burdens. The Germans at one stage appeared to be moving to counter-attack in No-Man's Land, and the digging party was bombed and driven in; yet towards morning Major Beardsmore was able to report that the trench almost reached across No-Man's Land,<sup>57</sup> though still shallow and unfinished at the farther end. But much of the ammunition intended to be forwarded through it remained clogging the sap. Consequently, whereas the 14th Brigade received occasional instalments of supplies, which were passed mainly to the right, the 8th Brigade on the left received very few. The front-line ditch on that flank was held by 300 men, chiefly of the 32nd and 31st, under Major White and Captain C. Mills, who were endeavouring, like the 14th Brigade, to fortify their ditch by building up a breastwork of sandbags and constructing bays and traverses. As with the 14th Brigade, the water-level in these ditches gradually rose when the Laies became blocked, until most officers and men were convinced that the enemy was putting into action some device for flooding them out. The troops were standing and working in water, and any men who were hit were in grave danger of drowning, unless mates were at hand to pull them out. Appeals were constantly sent back for "dry rifles and Lewis guns"; some men kept beside them three or four rifles, collected from the dead and wounded, in case their own weapons became choked with mud. The rear and left flank

<sup>57</sup> Beardsmore found its end to be beyond the German wire (see plate No. 31).

of the 8th Brigade were still guarded by comparatively small parties in the old German front line and in the Kastenweg, which was held in face of constant pressure from the enemy bombers. Lieutenant-Colonel Coghill<sup>58</sup> of the 32nd, who, despite his age, struggled through the mud round almost the whole front of the brigade, regarded apprehensively the formidable enemy position at Ferme Delangré, immediately beyond his left. "It dominates our position," he reported, "because it is built up." Other messages made it clear that the farm was an important rallying-point for the enemy; the 32nd could hear the German officers and N.C.O.'s shouting orders as reinforcements arrived there. Both that battalion and the 31st warned their brigadier that they would probably require help, and, shortly after 10 o'clock, the 32nd reported that it was being driven back. As the 30th had now been completely absorbed, Colonel Clark sought permission to throw in a company of the last battalion of the brigade—the 29th—but was informed that those reserves must not yet be used beyond the Australian line. At 10.25, however, he telegraphed that he had been forced to send forward one platoon of the 29th as carriers.<sup>59</sup> "This," he wrote, "is absolutely necessary."

At this juncture General M'Cay discovered that the left group of the Australian artillery was not firing upon Ferme Delangré, having been given to understand that it was in Australian hands. He therefore at once gave emphatic orders that it was to be heavily shelled. At the same time his anxiety was eased by reports from one of his staff, Major King, an officer of Gallipoli experience whom he had attached for the duration of this action to the previously-untried staff of the 8th Brigade, and who at 11 o'clock, after visiting the old Australian line, reported:

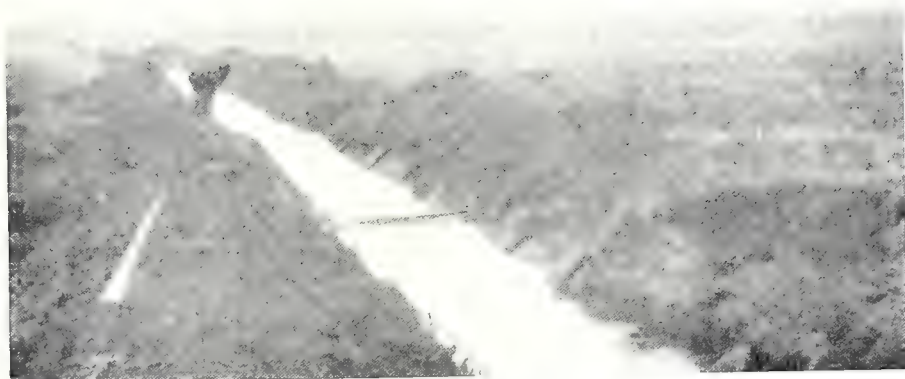
32 Battalion require one company reinforcements due to casualties. 30 and 31 doing well. A well-officered fatigue party of about thirty required to take over ammunition, sandbags, and bombs. This last urgent.

In spite of this reassurance, and of the fact that the front line, especially in the sector of the 14th Brigade, had been greatly improved and was held in fair strength, the situation

<sup>58</sup> Lieut.-Col. D. M. R. Coghill, V.D. Commanded 32nd Bn., 1915/16. Schoolmaster; of Woodville, S. Aust.; b. 15 April, 1871. Died 29 Nov., 1922.

<sup>59</sup> Major King, who represented the divisional staff in the 8th Brigade sector, was on the spot and was first consulted.





29. THE "RIVER" LAIES IN NO-MAN'S LAND NEAR FROMELLES

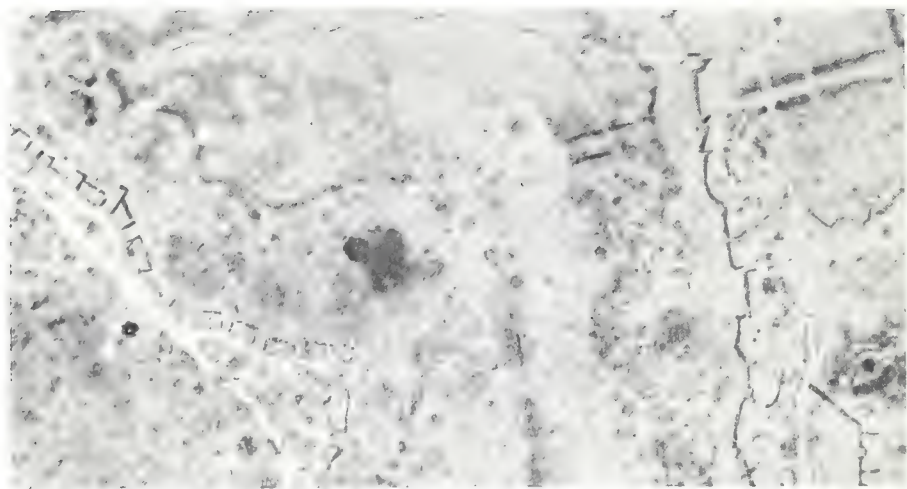
*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3965.  
Taken on 11th November, 1918.*



30. ONE OF THE OLD TRENCHES BEHIND THE GERMAN FRONT LINE  
NEAR FROMELLES

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3971.  
Taken on 11th November, 1918.*

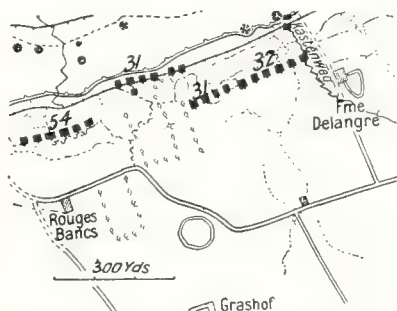
*To face p. 412.*



**31-32.** AIR VIEWS OF TRENCHES DUG ACROSS NO-MAN'S LAND BY AUSTRALIANS DURING THE NIGHT OF 19TH JULY, 1916

Along the top of Plate 31 can be seen the flank trench dug by the 30th Battalion from the Australian front line (left) almost to the German front line (right). Plate 32 shows the communication trench dug by the 14th Field Company, 5th Pioneer Battalion, and other units. Lieutenant-Colonel Cass's headquarters was in the small branch sap at its head. The advanced line first seized by the 54th Battalion is on the extreme right; and the trench held during the night is slightly in rear of it. The road dividing the 54th and 53rd Battalions is seen at the bottom.

about midnight was more dangerous than was realised. The front line of the two brigades was not connected, and the troops on either side of the gap did not even know where their neighbours were. Captain C. Mills of the 31st, on the left of the gap, constantly endeavoured to ascertain the position of the troops on his right, and Colonel Coghill of the 32nd himself crawled out in a similar attempt from the end of Mills's trench, but without success. The breach corresponded with a gap in the enemy's old support-line system and it was this circumstance which had caused Colonel Toll to decide, in this sector, on the occupation of the old German front line. M'Cay's orders, however, had not provided a garrison for the latter trench, the troops being ordered to advance farther after clearing it. The result of this divided policy



*Note: To avoid confusion the reinforcing units have generally been omitted in this and the following sketches*

was that, while the advanced line was held by a series of strong-posts, except for a wide gap in the left centre, the rear line (that is, the old German front) was practically ungarrisoned except opposite that gap where Toll—with two Vickers guns under Lieutenant Flack,<sup>60</sup> several Lewis guns, and two or three posts of his own battalion—was strongly established. It is true that farther left endeavours had been made by Captain Keay<sup>61</sup> and others of the 32nd to render the rear trench defensible. The task was made difficult by the existence of numerous wide openings in the parapets. Through these there often streamed the bullets of enemy machine-guns, causing the loss of many lives. The obvious measure—to fill these with sandbags from the German parapet—was generally impracticable, the bags being so rotten that they came to pieces when handled. On Colonel Toll's front one such opening was filled with the dead bodies of Germans. Between him and the thinly occupied sector on

<sup>60</sup> Capt. A. K. Flack, M.C.; 8th M.G. Coy. Ironworker; of Stanmore, N.S.W.; b. St. Pancras, London, 20 April, 1890.

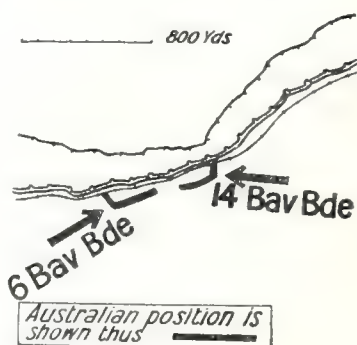
<sup>61</sup> Capt. R. A. Keay, 32nd Bn. Softgoods warehouseman; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. 9 Feb., 1891.

his left was a space of several hundred yards, which, for some hours, was entirely empty except for half-a-dozen men of the 31st under Company Sergeant-Major McLean.<sup>62</sup> In answer to repeated urgent demands for carrying parties and reinforcements, Colonel Clark of the 30th gradually sent forward the whole of the two companies of the 29th which had been given him to garrison the old Australian front. "I have now no men left at all," he reported at 11.35. "There was no other option." Of these reinforcements, half-a-company under Sergeant O'Sullivan<sup>63</sup> was used by Toll to garrison part of the old German front line on his left. On the right, in the 14th Brigade sector, this trench was practically empty except for some of the headquarters' personnel, the wounded, and the bombing party which had checked the intruding bombers of the enemy on the extreme right.

Such was the situation when the enemy, at first unobserved, made his preparatory movements for a second and more powerful counter-attack.

German accounts show that orders for this had been issued by the commander of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division at 8 o'clock. On the eastern flank the 14th Bavarian Reserve Brigade (consisting of the 20th and 21st Regiments), specially reinforced by one of its own battalions, the I/20th—till then held as divisional commander's reserve—was to strike from an easterly direction against the Australian left flank and left front, while the 16th Regiment (12th Brigade) was to support the operation by exerting pressure from the south-western flank. According to German records, this attack began at 11.40 p.m.

It was first acutely felt not on its main front, the Australian left, but on the extreme right. Here, about 1 o'clock on July 20th, Major Cowey of the 55th, desiring to revisit the extreme right of the advanced line, was walking down the old German front line in search of a better approach than the almost impassable ditch then serving that purpose, when he ran into several



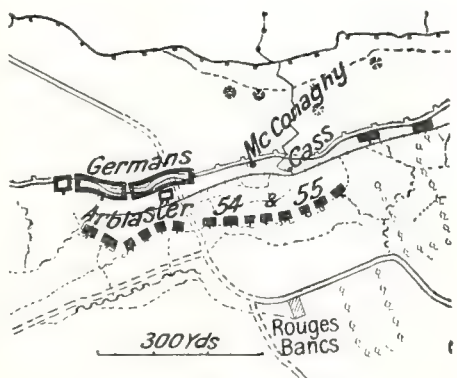
<sup>62</sup> Lieut. W. McLean, D.C.M.; 31st Bn. School teacher; of Rockhampton, Q'land; b. Q'land, 1886.

<sup>63</sup> Lieut. R. J. O'Sullivan, D.C.M.; 31st Bn. Accountant; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Beechworth, Vic., 1886.



Australians retiring. Discovering that they were men who could throw bombs, he ordered them to return to their post; but they had no sooner gone forward than he heard the burst of a bomb and a shout—"Haands oop!" Realising that the Bavarians must be advancing down the trench, Cowey hastened to Colonel McConaghy with the information that the Germans, if unchecked, would shortly be within bomb's throw of his headquarters.

Shortly before this, Cass, who till then was fully assured that the 15th Brigade had captured the trenches adjoining his right, had received from Lieutenant Hirst,<sup>64</sup> one of his junior officers in the advanced line on the right, a disquieting message:



2.5 a.m. Flares are going up almost in rear of our right about the old German trench. I heard that the 53rd are not joined up with the 15th Brigade or any other battalion, and so are practically a dead end without any connection or flank support.

A. H. HIRST, Lieut.,  
C. Coy.

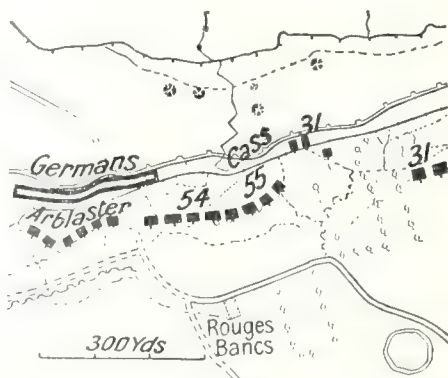
This was followed, five minutes later, by a note saying that grenades were urgently needed. At 2.25 arrived news that the right front was being counter-attacked. Its garrison—spread out in a number of separate posts, chiefly along the same muddy trench—was some 200 strong, including, on the extreme flank, the much-worn 53rd; nearer the centre, the 54th; and, scattered through both, the right reinforcing company of the 55th under Lieutenant Matthews, a brave and determined officer. In the right centre were some of the Lewis guns of that battalion under Lieutenant Agassiz,<sup>65</sup> Corporal Stringfellow,<sup>66</sup> and others; several Vickers guns

<sup>64</sup> Capt. A. H. Hirst; 54th Bn. Shire clerk; of Gordon, N.S.W.; b. Bundaberg, Q'land, 13 July, 1894.

<sup>65</sup> Lieut. C. T. Agassiz; 55th Bn. Factory manager; of Newtown, N.S.W.; b. Queanbeyan, N.S.W., 2 Nov., 1882.

<sup>66</sup> Cpl. G. H. J. Stringfellow (No. 3436; 55th Bn.). Clerk; of Parramatta, N.S.W.; b. Granville, N.S.W., 18 Nov., 1895.

of the 14th Machine Gun Company under Captain Spier<sup>67</sup> and Lieutenant Briggs;<sup>68</sup> and, farther right, bombing parties of all these battalions, organised, on the extreme flank, by Captain Arblaster and, near the road, by Lieutenant Gunter. The furious bombing in Arblaster's sector—caused by the first counter-attack along the old front line and communication trench—had died down at about 1 o'clock in the morning; but, as the denseness of the night began to grow faintly less towards the coming of dawn, some of the troops on the extreme right observed the figures of men moving over the open past their flank towards the old German front line in their right rear. The air was misty, but the men moving were clearly seen, and rapid fire was opened on them; but Lieutenant Matthews, who, though badly wounded through the foot, maintained a masterly control over his company, ordered it to cease, suspecting that these figures might be part of the 15th Brigade. About the same time, however, Germans were observed occupying an old trench or ditch immediately in front; Private Mitchell of the 53rd and a few others, crawling forward into shell-holes, began to snipe them,<sup>69</sup> and the firing presently became general. On the extreme right and right rear the bombing again grew furious. A party under Sergeant Bowman<sup>70</sup> guarding that flank was driven back. It was presently noticed that, while firing towards the front, men were being shot from the rear, and, to the complete surprise of most of its members, the force holding the right flank perceived, through the mist and the bomb-smoke, that the old



<sup>67</sup> Major C. M. Spier. Commanded 14th M.G. Coy., 1916/18. Clerk; of Sydney; b. 7 June, 1894.

<sup>68</sup> Lieut. H. F. Briggs; 14th M.G. Coy. Salesman; of Sydney; b. Brighton, Eng., 25 Feb., 1891. Killed in action, 20 July, 1916.

<sup>69</sup> Mitchell continued to snipe the enemy after he had been blinded in one eye and his comrade shot through the head. He was eventually captured.

<sup>70</sup> Sgt. D. McQ. Bowman (No. 1715; 55th Bn.). Salesman; of Edinburgh, Scotland; b. Edinburgh, 20 Jan., 1888. Died 26 Sept., 1925.

German front line in its right rear, together with the only communication trench in rear of the 53rd, was occupied by the enemy.

The struggle on the right, which had thus recommenced, lasted with little intermission until the end of the action. As in the first counter-attack, the din of fighting and the light of flares, often blurred by dust and smoke, came all the time from Arblaster's sector, together with frequent appeals for men and grenades. "For God's sake send us bombs!" was passed down the line again and again. Time after time men from the posts farther east made their way along the trench towards the uproar—and of every ten barely one came back. Gunter sent a dozen of his bombers. One by one Murray nodded to his officers to move off into that mêlée until the last of them, Captain Ranson,<sup>71</sup> had left him. Lieutenant Pratt had been shot through the heart an hour or two before. The fire from the rear was becoming deadly, and the leaders were fast being shot down. Lieutenant Mendelsohn<sup>72</sup> was killed, and Lieutenant Folkard<sup>73</sup> and several others wounded. All connection with the rest of the position, except through the advanced line and thence by ditches or trenches far round to the left, had been cut off; bombs were desperately short and ammunition failing.

In these straits Arblaster, who throughout this terrible night had shown himself a singularly cool and brave leader, decided that the only remaining chance of restoring the position lay in facing to the rear and charging the Germans in their old front line. He accordingly distributed along his trench a number of men with bombs, and, giving the signal, led them over the parados and charged across the open. They were at once met by heavy fire—the gallant leader was mortally wounded, and the attacking line broke back to the trench from which it had started, leaving the situation unimproved.

The position of the 53rd, now desperate, had not at any time in the night been fully known to Cass, but its results

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<sup>71</sup> Capt. F. R. Ranson, 53rd Bn. Draughtsman; of Strathfield, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 23 Sept., 1894.

<sup>72</sup> Lieut. B. L. Mendelsohn; 55th Bn. Clerk; of Bondi and Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Esk, Q'land, 15 May, 1891. Killed in action, 20 July, 1916.

<sup>73</sup> Capt. G. D'A. Folkard; 55th Bn. Bank clerk; of Harris Park, N.S.W.; b. Kogarah, N.S.W., 24 Feb., 1894.

at this stage began to be felt. Part of the force which had thus attempted to escape remained in the trench where Arblaster lay wounded; but the general tendency was to shrink to the left across the roadway into the trenches occupied by the 54th. This course, which afforded the best chance of avoiding capture, was adopted by Captain Murray, on whom had now devolved the command of the 53rd. Consequently, out of the area where bombing and firing had for the last hour been incessant, came a remnant of that battalion along the advanced trench, and back into the old German front line. Cass, aware that a critical struggle was in progress, was sending urgent messages to Captain Street, in charge of the 14th Brigade report-centre, to secure more grenades. Indicating the situation, he wrote at 3 a.m.—

It is reported to me that the 53rd on my right has given way slightly and that Germans are coming in about N.15.a.9½ (350 yards W.S.W. of Cass's headquarters).

At 3.22—

Position is serious, as we have no grenades and enemy is preparing to attack from the vicinity of N.15.a.8.6 to N.15.b.4.6 (*i.e.*, from the direction of a German work known as "The Teufelsgraben," near Rouges Bancs).

At 3.45—

Position very serious. 53rd are retiring. Enemy behind them and in their old front line N.9.c.6.1 (*i.e.*, 480 yards W. of Cass's headquarters) and within 100 yards of my right.

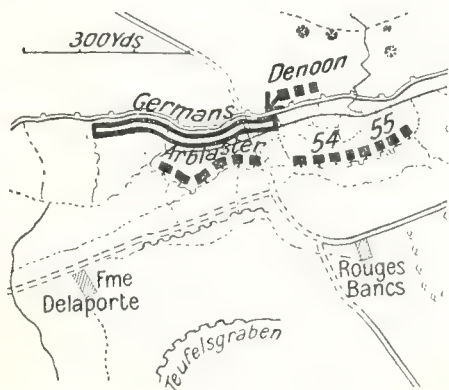
The 53rd were indeed exhausted by the difficult struggle on this flank, of which they had borne the brunt. The order given by Arblaster to charge back towards the Australian trenches, or Murray's sectional order which followed it, appears—as constantly happens in battle—to have spread to other parts, for there passed along the old German front line at this juncture the cry: "We have been ordered to retire." There were also shouts: "Our own artillery are shelling us." Murray, with some of his men, remained near Gunter's post taking active steps to secure the safety of that sector; but other parts of the 53rd continued streaming to the rear, and, though Cass personally appealed to them to return and face the enemy, he lacked the influence of their own officers, who had mostly fallen.

At this juncture Colonel McConaghy and Major Cowey of the 55th came up to Cass bearing the news that in the old German front line the enemy was advancing so fast that,



unless stopped, he would within a few minutes reach the head of the communication trench across No-Man's Land, and thus sever the sole practicable line of communication for the 14th Brigade. German flares were constantly being shot forward ahead of their advance, and a sign-board, evidently erected to warn the enemy machine-gunners, could be seen projecting from the trenches and advancing as the counter-attack progressed. The crisis called for instant action, and Sergeant Stringer<sup>74</sup> of the 54th rallied a few badly shaken men and boldly assaulted—the Germans tossing stick-bombs from the shelter of the trench, while the Australians, up on the parapet, flung their missiles like cricketers throwing at a wicket. This kept the enemy in check while Major Cowey hurried across No-Man's

Land for reinforcements. Cass urged McConaghy to throw some of the 55th across the open and drive the enemy back. McConaghy, who throughout had acted vigorously, was opposed to this particular method, which involved great risk and had not always proved the most effective; however, upon



Cass's insistence, he ordered Lieutenant Denoon,<sup>75</sup> who chanced to be at hand, to collect his men and attack, preferably along the parapet. Cass at this juncture despatched to his brigadier the following message:

4.20 a.m. Position almost desperate. Have got 55th and a few of the 54th together and have temporarily checked enemy. But do get our guns to work at once, please. The 53rd have lost confidence temporarily and will not willingly stand their ground. Some appear to be breaking across No-Man's Land. If they give way to my right rear, I must withdraw or be surrounded.

McConaghy's call for bombs and bombers had been heard by some of the 56th digging the communication trench. Sergeant Watt<sup>76</sup> had hurried to the fight, where he led the

<sup>74</sup> Sgt. F. T. Stringer, D.C.M. (No. 1833; 54th Bn.). Bush worker; of Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.; b. Deniliquin, N.S.W., 25 June, 1882.

<sup>75</sup> Lieut. W. Denoon, M.C.; 55th Bn. Accountant; of Cootamundra and Stanmore, N.S.W.; b. Cootamundra, 4 Nov., 1882. Died 22 Jan., 1923.

<sup>76</sup> Lieut. J. C. Watt, M.C., D.C.M.; 56th Bn. Miner; of Emmaville, N.S.W.; b. Stewart's Brook, N.S.W., 28 Sept., 1896.

bombing, while Sergeant Gordon<sup>77</sup> at once set to work with Private Fishenden<sup>78</sup> to provide a constant supply of grenades. Some of Cass's men, specially sent back to the old Australian line, also returned with a consignment. Taking a sufficient supply,<sup>79</sup> Denoon and his party moved forward in the old No-Man's Land beside the German breastwork, bombing into the trench where the Germans were. He was soon wounded, and Corporal Hancock,<sup>80</sup> who accompanied him, was killed; but the enemy was driven back for some eighty yards along his front line. Shortly afterwards Major Cowey returned from the old Australian trench with Sergeant Hurley<sup>81</sup> and a section of bombers of the 56th Battalion, whom he managed to secure in spite of the order that this part of the 56th must not be thrown into the fight. With Lieutenant S. A. Pinkstone of the 55th they took position in the recaptured trench, and there followed a Herculean bomb-fight,<sup>82</sup> in which they beat down the Bavarian attack and for the time being thoroughly subdued the enemy in his old front line.

But, besides advancing along that line, the enemy had penetrated through the trenches from which Murray had withdrawn, and had begun to appear in a ditch or sap east of the road and intermediate between the old German front line and the advanced Australian line. From this position he had the advanced posts at a terrible disadvantage. Having built no parados to protect themselves from behind, they were exposed down to their shoulder-blades, and could only shelter below the rear bank of their wretched drain or trench. The enemy succeeded in setting up a machine-gun in his ditch, along which could be seen crowding the heads and shoulders of the Bavarians. Gunter organised against them two bombing attacks, both of which failed. One of the Lewis gunners in Agassiz' post, however, turned his gun to

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<sup>77</sup> Lieut. T. F. Gordon, M.M.; 56th Bn. Grocer; of Sydney; b. Elie, Fifeshire, Scotland, 29 Dec., 1887. Died of wounds, 30 Nov., 1917.

<sup>78</sup> Cpl. W. T. Fishenden (No. 3039; 56th Bn.). Labourer; of Glen Innes, N.S.W.; b. Furracabad, N.S.W., 29 Sept., 1890. Killed in action, 17 April, 1918.

<sup>79</sup> Each man carried three grenades, and four carriers followed, each with a bagful.

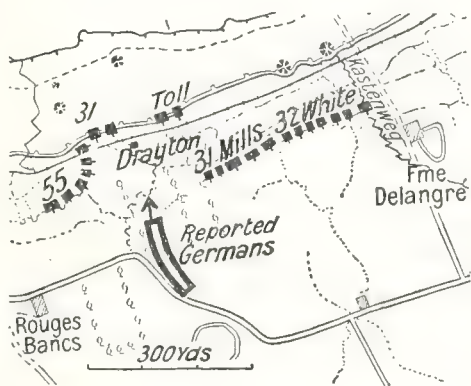
<sup>80</sup> Cpl. E. F. Hancock (No. 3240; 55th Bn.). School teacher; of Dungog, N.S.W.; b. Allynbrook, N.S.W., 4 Feb., 1895. Killed in action, 20 July, 1916.

<sup>81</sup> Sgt. W. Hurley, D.C.M. (No. 946; 56th Bn.). Labourer; of St. Peters, N.S.W.; b. Bermondsey, London, 1895.

<sup>82</sup> "There must have been nearly twelve bombs in the air at a time," said an eyewitness afterwards. A Bavarian bomber told the Crown Prince of Germany that he had thrown over 500. (See *The Story of the Fifth Australian Division*, by Captain A. D. Ellis, p. 114.)

the rear, and, resting it high above the trench on the shoulder of Corporal Stringfellow, opened upon these Germans. The gunner was presently shot through the head, but Agassiz continued to fire over his corporal's shoulder, with the result that the Bavarians were forced under cover, and remained suppressed for the next hour or more. Thus on the right flank, although the situation remained perilous in the extreme, the intrusion of the enemy, both in the front and intermediate lines, was for the time being checked, and his activity somewhat suppressed.

Meanwhile, however, a crisis had occurred on the left. The enemy had been heard mustering in Ferme Delangré, and at 2.15 the fire of the German artillery upon the 32nd Battalion increased, and an intense musketry fire broke out. An urgent summons was forthwith sent to the artillery to shell the farm. At 2.30 Colonel Toll of the 31st was informed by Lieutenant Drayton that his small advanced post,<sup>83</sup> in the left centre of the Australian front, was threatened by a force of Germans who had apparently advanced along the road which Toll had reached the previous evening. There had been several false alarms, and Toll and those around him were disposed to think that his informant had mistaken for attacking infantry a row of trees, on which the machine-guns had through a similar error been firing. The sound of bombing shortly afterwards heard in that direction gave evidence



that the report might be true. Whatever was the fact, Drayton's advanced post fell back to the old German front line on Toll's right, the wide gap between the advanced lines of the two brigades being thus uncovered except for the troops with or near Toll in the old German front trench.

Captain C. Mills, who was in charge of the 8th Brigade's advanced line to the left of this gap, had, though out of

<sup>83</sup> See p. 379. Drayton had been in touch with Lieut. N. A. Robinson of the 55th, and part of Capt. Gibbins's company.



touch with the right, kept up communication with Toll in rear, and just before dawn he had received an order to hold on at all costs until relieved by the 29th. Shortly afterwards a message, passed from mouth to mouth along the line, reached him from the left, to the effect that Major White of the 32nd urgently wished to speak to him. Hastening along the trench, he found White on the extreme flank, and learned that on the left an enemy force had just emerged from the mist, evidently about to counter-attack. White proposed to throw them back by himself attacking, and asked Mills to safeguard the trench in the meanwhile by extending his flank along it. White then collected his men and moved off to the left along the trench, and Mills turned to regain his own position. During his absence, however, the enemy had attacked his line and he himself was now suddenly surrounded and taken prisoner.<sup>84</sup> His men had been bombed, some of them captured, others driven back on the old German front trench. Finding it vacant some continued across No-Man's Land to the original Australian lines. Meanwhile the Germans who had attacked them, following along ditches, approached their old front line. Farther to the west they were held off by Gibbins's company of the 55th. At Toll's actual headquarters and for a short space eastwards, a small party<sup>85</sup> managed to keep them at some distance; but farther east, working along behind the parados they reached their old front line and quickly penetrated eastwards along the almost empty position behind the main body of the 32nd. The handful of that battalion and of the 29th<sup>86</sup> who held it was caught between these bombers and the enemy now attacking from west of the Kastenweg and was driven out.

<sup>84</sup> This would be about 3.15 a.m. Mills received a wound in the hand and almost immediately found the enemy "all round, bombing, and firing from the hip. A German under-officer," he stated after the war, "stopped his men near me, jumped into the trench, seized me by the arm, and said in English: 'Why did you not put up your hands, officer? Come with me.'" Having no opportunity for resistance, Mills was captured.

<sup>85</sup> In this party were Colonel Toll; Lieutenant L. J. Trounson, with a Lewis gun mounted on the barricade of dead Germans; Lieutenant A. K. Flack, with his Vickers guns; Corporal R. J. Carew, Lieutenant G. H. Wilson, Private F. W. C. Forsyth, and some others. (Trounson belonged to Ararat and Hollybush, Vic.; Flack to Stanmore, N.S.W.; Carew to Ipswich and Kingaroy, Q'land; Wilson to Wynnum, Q'land; Forsyth to Windsors, Q'land.)

<sup>86</sup> The trench was partly held by the 20th (*see pp. 414 and 424*), which lost here two fine officers, Captains K. M. Mortimer (of Leneva West, Vic.) and T. F. Sheridan (of Prahran, Vic.). Both were killed. The bombing officer of the 32nd, Lieutenant E. H. Chinner (of Peterborough, S. Aust.), had been mortally wounded in this trench, apparently in attempting to smother a bomb which he had dropped when hit. Captain Marsden of the 8th Machine Gun Company twice visited the bomb-stop in this trench and found all quiet.



Yet the 32nd holding the advanced position in and beside the Kastenweg had not given way.

The counter-attack upon that trench had, according to the historian of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R., been entrusted to two support companies—one from the second line, and another from the area behind Ferme Delangré.<sup>87</sup> The operation was to be simultaneous with an attack by a stronger force—the I Battalion of the 21st Regiment, supported by two companies of the 20th—against the left flank of the 32nd in the old German front line,<sup>88</sup> but at first it proceeded slowly. "The difficulty of communication in the pitchy darkness of the night—rendered more obscure by the smoke of the bursting shells—and the serious shortage of bombs," says the German account,<sup>89</sup> "at first delayed progress; but, from the time when the pioneers brought up fresh supplies of ammunition, the attack began to go forward, at first more slowly, afterwards with ever-increasing impetus."

The 32nd was thus without its knowledge surrounded. Throughout the night Lieutenant S. E. G. Mills, a Western Australian farmer, had held the Kastenweg in spite of his double wound, just as Arblaster had held the right. After the earlier counter-attacks—first, as already stated, apparently up the Kastenweg about 7.40 p.m., and second partly over the open at 10<sup>90</sup>—the enemy had been quieter, the artillery at 11 o'clock having pounded Delangré Farm and its machine-guns into silence. Bombing had nevertheless continued at both left flank barricades, and an offer had been received from the 29th that one of its companies should hold the rearward barrier, in the old German firing line, leaving Lieutenant S. E. G. Mills and the 32nd to hold the forward one, in the Kastenweg. This offer Mills had eventually accepted. He could hear bombing in his rear, but had no anxiety until, about 3.15 a.m., Captain Mortimer<sup>91</sup> of the 29th, a Duntroon graduate of fine quality, informed him that the Germans had penetrated along the whole of the vacant space between the old German line and the ditch that the

<sup>87</sup> Whether these, or troops from farther west, had driven in the 31st, is uncertain.

<sup>88</sup> See also the German account quoted on p. 430.

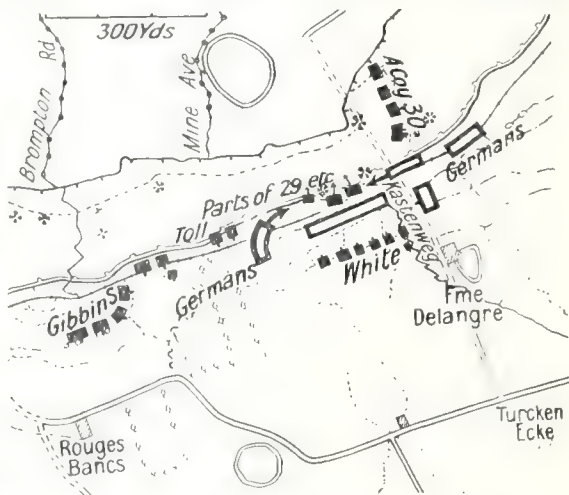
<sup>89</sup> *History of the 21st Bavarian R.I.R.*, p. 50.

<sup>90</sup> The first counter-attack on this flank is referred to on pp. 400-1; the second on p. 412. The first seems to have been eventually bombed back by Sergeant R. Alexander (of Perth, W. Aust.) and a mixed party which ran along the parapet to gain range. Captain White's S.O.S. signal rockets would not fire, probably through damp. Part of the second attack came over the open, German reinforcements filing across the front and then turning north and advancing with great bravery. The 32nd's observation post was driven in, but the fire of rifles (which White had set every third man to clean), three Lewis guns, and one Vickers machine-gun swept the enemy away. A few Germans came close enough to throw bombs.

<sup>91</sup> Captain K. M. Mortimer, 29th Bn. Duntroon graduate; of Leneva West, Vic.; b. Leneva West, 9 Oct., 1895. Killed in action, 20 July, 1916.

32nd were holding. Mortimer, who went off "to see how things were" down the Kastenweg, was never seen again. Mills made his way to White with the news that they were cut off.

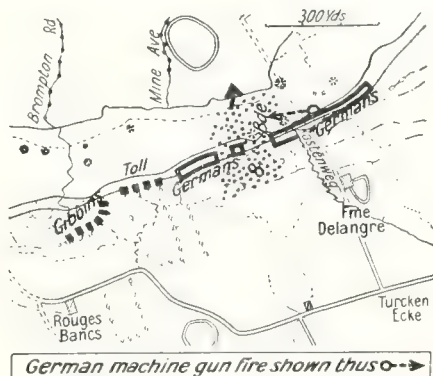
White and Mills were at once convinced that any attempt to drive out the Germans (of which White had spoken to Captain C. Mills) was now out of the question. The only possible course was to turn their men round and endeavour to charge through to the original Australian trenches. White therefore directed the machine-guns to be collected and sent back to the Australian lines by a long détour towards the



west, where he thought they would be less likely to encounter the enemy. S. E. G. Mills walked along the line explaining the order, telling the men to wait for a signal and meanwhile to keep up constant fire. He succeeded in warning most of them even on the extreme flank, which was now being attacked. They made their way to a ditch in rear of that held during the night; and from here at 3.45, with machine-guns firing at them from front, flank, and rear, some 150 men attempted almost simultaneously to charge over the top to the Australian lines. A considerable part—including White, who like many others had to fight the Germans hand to hand, and Mills, who immediately afterwards fainted of his wounds—crossed the German front trench, and the fragment of the 8th Brigade streamed across No-Man's Land towards the Australian position. The engineers and working party of the 30th, who had actually dug their new firing-line to within twenty yards of the German trench,<sup>92</sup> had also been driven out. The

<sup>92</sup> The achievement of this almost incredible feat is proved by the aeroplane-photograph (Plate 31) on which the trench can be plainly traced almost to the German parapet.

oblique fire of German machine-guns from the eastern flank caused terrible loss;<sup>93</sup> a number of men, however, reached the Australian trench. The machine-gunners and others, who throughout the night had blocked the enemy's way up the Kastenweg, had received no order to withdraw, and, being left alone and counter-attacked from all sides, most of them were overwhelmed and shot down or captured. Captain Krinks's post, however, in the craters east of the trench was missed by the enemy. Being close in front of the Farm and situated on the same rise, its occupants could see what was happening on the lower ground in their rear on both sides of the Kastenweg. Realising that they were cut off, and being eleven in number, they decided—after debate—to make a run for it together rather than separately, and to assist any among them who met with trouble. Leaving their arms, and trusting to surprise, half of them succeeded in crossing two enemy trenches, each containing Germans. In the second trench two of their number were seized; but the remainder instantly turned round, as they had arranged to do, scared the Germans, released their comrades, and escaped with them into No-Man's Land, Krinks and three comrades eventually reaching the front of the 60th British Brigade.<sup>94</sup> Some parties of the 8th Brigade which came



<sup>93</sup> It is recorded that, in an endeavour to protect the 8th Brigade against this deadly enfilade-fire, Corpl. T. C. Rowley (of Enfield, N.S.W.), 56th Battalion, climbed on to the parapet and threw bombs at some of the enemy who were firing. Of the 32nd, Lieut. T. P. Hagan (of Semaphore, S. Aust.) was killed during this dash. Lieut. E. H. Chinner (of Peterborough, S. Aust.), who had been badly wounded, died shortly after capture. Major Hughes, lying wounded, was observed by two men, Sgt. A. E. Luly (of Perth, W. Aust.) and Pte. T. W. Elmer (of East Carrington, W. Aust.), who tried to get him away. When the Germans were within fifty yards he asked his companions to destroy all his papers, and this had just been completed when all three were captured.

<sup>94</sup> This daring escape had a sad sequel. The men who reached safety with Krinks were Corporal A. H. McL. Forbes and Private J. H. Wishart (both of Wallsend, N.S.W.) and Private T. L. Watts (of Hurstville, N.S.W.); but two others, L/Cpl. S. B. Wells (of Wollongong, N.S.W.) and Private E. C. E. Amps

upon the old German line at points where it was crowded with the enemy were less successful, being either immediately captured or mown down, or else driven back into shell-holes or into the line they had left. There, with a few groups which had not received White's order, a few of them continued for several hours to offer a stubborn but hopeless defence.

This retirement was in progress at 4 o'clock; but, long before hearing of it, M'Cay and Wagstaff, with their experience of Gallipoli, had recognised that the coming of daylight, when the enemy could see the position and would probably attack, must be a critical moment in the operation. Their fears, however, had chiefly concerned the other flank. In spite of a repetition of Haking's order, the 61st Division had not yet made its projected assault upon the Sugar-loaf, whose machine-guns would in the morning sweep Cass's right and rear. M'Cay, therefore, at 2.40 had asked the heavy artillery, and at 3.15 the field artillery, to bombard the German salient on Cass's flank, and at 3.30 had warned the 15th Brigade that from earliest dawn it must pour rifle-fire upon the trenches in that area, in order to keep down the heads of the enemy. At 3.45 he had informed the field artillery of the position of Cass's right, as far as he then knew it, and ordered it to lay a special bombardment on the enemy at that point "as soon as ever it is light." The 60th British Brigade and the artillery had been asked to take similar measures to protect the 8th Brigade.<sup>95</sup> The latest messages from the front were fairly hopeful, but in the dressing stations it was remarked that the wounded no longer showed the jubilant spirit of the earlier hours, but were depressed and silent, except for an occasional reference to "the blasted Sugar-loaf."

After issuing these orders M'Cay had gone to General Haking's temporary headquarters at Sailly, where a

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(of Coff's Harbour, N.S.W.), had got clear of the German trenches, but in the wire-entanglement Wells was shot down and Amps injured. The 30th Battalion immediately after the fight was sent to reserve, but Krinks and his three companions returned to the trenches as soon as it was dusk, and, taking a stretcher, went out into No-Man's Land to find their comrades. In this they succeeded, and were bringing in Wells on a stretcher when a sentry of their own brigade, catching sight of their figures, fired, killing Wishart and Watts with a single shot.

<sup>95</sup> The 60th Brigade, in response to an appeal from the 8th Brigade, when the trench across No-Man's Land was threatened, made vigorous use of their machine-guns.



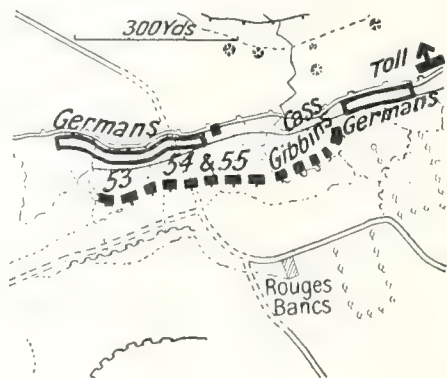
conference was to be held at 5 o'clock to decide upon the operations for the day. To this came General Monro of the First Army, with General Barrow, the chief of his staff, the others present being Haking and the two divisional commanders. The commander of the 61st explained that his division had found it impossible to place in position during the night the companies allotted for the attack upon the Sugar-loaf, which, in truth, would have been hardly likely to result in anything except greatly increased loss. The conference was accordingly about to consider the renewal of the assault during the morning by the whole of the 61st Division, when M'Cay was called to the telephone to receive an urgent message from his headquarters, where Colonel Wagstaff had just received bad news from both the 8th and 14th Brigades. Colonel Pope of the 14th had first telephoned to the effect that he had received a message from Cass saying that the position was desperate.<sup>96</sup> Wagstaff had replied that the orders were to hold on, and, upon Pope's stating that he thought he could do so if reinforced, had authorised him to employ as reinforcement half of the 56th Battalion. Wagstaff had then telephoned to the 8th Brigade asking for the latest information, and had received from General Tivey the ill-tidings that the 31st and 32nd Battalions were back in their own lines, this news being confirmed by the *liaison* officer, Major King. Wagstaff, recognising that Pope's assault-battalions were now unsupported in the enemy's lines, asked Tivey to inform their commander while he himself, at 5.15, telephoned to M'Cay asking what instructions should be sent to that brigade—to hold on with reinforcements, or to withdraw.

Upon M'Cay reporting the news to Monro and Haking, it was immediately decided to abandon the attack and withdraw the 14th Brigade. Meanwhile Pope, receiving Tivey's warning, had at 5.15 despatched a message to Cass apprising him of the fact that the 8th Brigade had been driven back, and that the 14th also would probably be withdrawn. "Do not retire," he added, "until you receive word. Machine-guns should be brought back."

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<sup>96</sup> This was the message sent at 4.20 (*see p. 419*).

This message did not reach Cass until 6.30, by which time the threat against his own communications had much diminished. He had already been informed by his own troops of the withdrawal of the 8th Brigade.<sup>97</sup> The portion of that brigade under Colonel Toll on his immediate flank, not having been surrounded, had continued to hold on for an hour and a half after the remainder had fought their way out. The enemy had subsequently renewed his bombardment, and one of the Vickers guns at Toll's headquarters had been put out of action by a burst of shrapnel. At 5.30 the Bavarians returned to the attack, headed by bombing teams, which, as Toll's men had exhausted their grenade-supply, could only be resisted by rifle-fire. Colonel Toll and Still, his intelligence officer, had much difficulty in holding the troops, who had seen the 32nd withdrawn. Unsupervised parties began to break back across No-Man's Land, and the sector rapidly emptied. The enemy now reached the line on Toll's right also, cutting him off from the 14th Brigade. The small garrison still holding with him was driven out by the approach of the bombers. Lieutenant Trounson managed to get back to the Australian line with two Lewis guns. Lieutenant Flack of the 8th Machine Gun Company, who had been wounded, remained almost



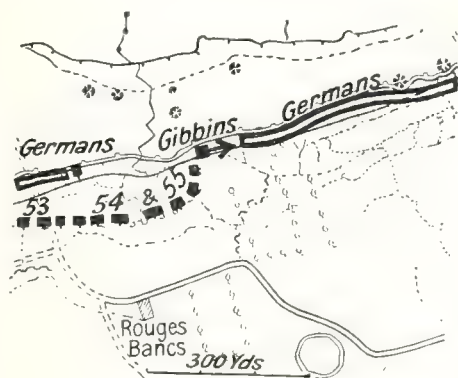
to the last. In spite of his advice, one of his men, Private Jeater,<sup>98</sup> stayed to fire a full belt of ammunition at a line of Germans coolly approaching from the front, who thereupon scattered wildly, diving for cover. When an enemy bomb burst almost beneath him, Jeater picked up his gun and carried it to the Australian line. Slightly farther east Toll,

<sup>97</sup> He did not, at first, credit the report, but it had been confirmed at 6.15 by Colonel McConaghy.

<sup>98</sup> Lieut. W. D. Jeater, 8th M.G. Coy. Architectural draughtsman; of Newcastle, N.S.W.; b. Penrith, N.S.W., 2 Aug., 1896.

at 5.45, finding himself alone with Still and Corporal Carew, both seriously wounded, strode back across No-Man's Land, practically the last of his brigade.

The flank of the 14th Brigade, which would have been left exposed by this withdrawal, had already been safeguarded by Captain Gibbins of the 55th, who, among other wise measures, had at an early stage set Lieutenant Wyllie<sup>99</sup> to improve an existing communication trench from his left to the German front line. Wyllie and his men had afterwards to be despatched as reinforcements to the right, but the trench had been completed, and when the Bavarians drove back Drayton's post in the old German front line, where the 31st had connected with the 55th, Gibbins had ordered Corporal Anson and some men to bomb them back. This Anson had done, and the recoiling Germans, finding themselves also faced by the Australian barrage, had been temporarily checked. Gibbins sent one of his officers, Lieutenant Chapman,<sup>100</sup> for some grenades, and on obtaining them asked this officer and some men to follow him, and, bombing from outside the parapet in the old No-Man's Land, again drove the enemy back along part of the old German front trench originally held by the 31st, and left it garrisoned by Sergeant Law and a few of the 31st<sup>101</sup> together with some of his own men. Law endeavoured with this handful to regain the whole position lost by the 31st, but met with strong resistance. Gibbins returned thither, and leading a party composed of Lieutenants Chapman



<sup>99</sup> Capt. K. R. Wyllie, M.C.; 55th Bn. Engineering surveyor; of Adelaide, S. Aust.; b. Kent Town, S. Aust., 28 Nov., 1891.

<sup>100</sup> Capt. P. W. Chapman, M.C.; 55th Bn. Student; of Orange and Goulburn, N.S.W.; b. Glen Innes, N.S.W., 28 Nov., 1886. Killed in action, 12 March, 1917.

<sup>101</sup> Gibbins had with him throughout the night, on his right, a small detachment of the 31st under Lieutenant R. C. Aland and Sergeant Law. This detachment, isolated from the rest of its battalion, had dug and held the section of Gibbins's trench connecting him with the 54th. Many of its men, like those on either side of them, had been drafted off into the bomb-fighting on Arblaster's flank. Shortly after midnight Aland had observed signs that Germans in front of him, some 200

and N. A. Robinson, and Private Larbalestier,<sup>102</sup> again drove back the Germans. Having himself now been wounded in the head, he left Chapman in charge of the flank, and sent Robinson to the Australian lines with instructions to bring forward, if possible, some of the 8th Brigade to help their comrades under Sergeant Law to hold the sector. Robinson twice made the journey, but the 8th Brigade was exhausted and shaken, and he brought back only seven men.

The German accounts admit that the counter-attacks on the 5th Australian Division at first made practically no progress. The intelligence officer of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division informed the Sixth Army:

"2.40. Enemy forced out of trenches in Sector I (*i.e.*, probably the old German front line east of the Kastenweg. The Bavarian division's front was held in four regimental sectors, I-IV, each being subdivided into company sectors, IA, IB, IC, and so on). The enemy remained near this position, and erected several machine-guns. Our infantry is located close by. Counter-attack started by both our flanks.

"3.30. The situation remains unchanged.

"4.30. The enemy has endeavoured to gain ground. Otherwise the position is unchanged.

"5 a.m. Our counter-attack from IIIA to IID and C (*i.e.*, against the 53rd) is progressing. The enemy is driven out of IIDC. Our counter-attack from IIA to IIB (*i.e.*, from the eastern flank south-westwards) has not yet started, but the supports are advanced."

The vigorous measures adopted by Gibbins on the left had relieved the pressure as much as Denoon's counter-attack on the right, of which Cass wrote at 6.15:

Position much easier and improved. Have driven enemy back by counter-attack and grenades well out of bombing distance. . . .

The retirement of the 8th Brigade, however, had been seen from many parts of the line, and had cast a marked shadow over the spirits of the remaining troops. Probably failure had really been inevitable ever since the repulse at the Sugar-loaf, but it was not until this moment that, for

yards away, were trying to establish a machine-gun position. He and Law therefore crept out to ascertain the truth, with a view to organising an assault if their suspicion proved true. They kept forty yards apart, and had almost reached the suspected position when Law heard a sound which indicated that he had been observed. Seeing that instant action was necessary, he shouted to Aland, rushed forward, and surprised an enemy machine-gun crew, who had crawled along a ditch near Rouges Bancs road. He bayoneted the first man; the rest scattered; and before Aland could reach the spot Law had captured the gun. [Law (afterwards Warrant-Officer F. Law, D.C.M.) was of Barcaldine, Q'land; machine shearing-expert; b. Wentworth, N.S.W., 3 Jan., 1872. Aland (later Capt. R. C. Aland, M.C.) was of Brisbane; clerk; b. 13 Nov., 1895.]

<sup>102</sup> Pte. P. W. Larbalestier (No. 3348; 55th Bn.). Farmer; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Alexandria, N.S.W., 17 June, 1892. Died 29 March, 1922.



most of those engaged, the operation took on a hopeless aspect. The mere sight of men of their own side running towards the rear always came as a rude and hateful shock to those in neighbouring sectors. They could not realise that the men whom they saw running were not always necessarily panic-stricken, but sometimes included, as on this occasion, troops who, rather than submit to capture, were making a desperate effort to regain their own lines. Whatever its motive, the retirement rendered the position of the 14th Brigade even more dangerous than before. Cass had just been definitely informed of it when he sent the message above-quoted. A few minutes later he received Pope's order to prepare for withdrawal. He at once issued to all parts of his force the following instruction:

Be prepared to withdraw on the order being given. The old German front line will be held to the end. Make arrangements to dribble men in very small parties back through sap across No-Man's Land to our front line. Make no move until I send the word "Withdraw."

He then sent an order to the machine-gunners to withdraw their guns one at a time, this process to begin immediately. Having decided that the retirement should be covered by a party under some specially trusted officer, Cass, with McConaghy's advice, selected for this duty Captain Gibbins. Cass did not intend that the rear-guard should immediately take position in the old German front line, but he was by this time utterly worn out by strain and fatigue, and it is possible that he did not make the point clear to McConaghy, who at once wrote to Gibbins and the officers of the 55th:

Secret. Capt. Gibbins and 55 officers. You must prepare for an orderly retirement. We are unprotected on our flanks.

Hold first Hun line until further orders.

D. MCCONAGHY, Lt.-Col.,

20.7.16.

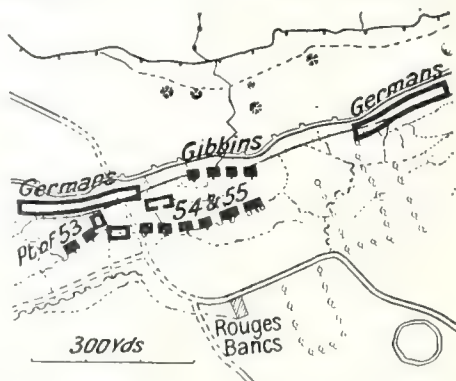
C.O. 55.

6.30 a.m.

The responsible task of rear-guard commander could not have fallen to a more suitable man. Combining the gentlest of natures<sup>103</sup> with a most stern sense of discipline and duty, Gibbins possessed the firmest possible hold upon his men.

<sup>103</sup> Lieut. Chapman, himself also one of the gentlest of men, has left on record that he and Gibbins, sitting on the parapets during the night while their men dug, saw a figure crawling towards them from behind. It proved to be a German, dreadfully wounded, bathed in blood and almost senseless. They led him, but, when Chapman let go one of his hands, "the poor mangled brute got up on his knees . . . and started to pray. 'Oh cruel! cruel!' said Gib. . . . and together we helped him along."

who almost worshipped him. The wound in his head had now been bandaged, and, on receiving McConaghy's order, he at once withdrew his men to the German front line. Although movement across the open was highly dangerous, he boldly adopted this method, and most of his men, making the journey in a rush, appear to have got safely across. Lewis guns were already being brought through the trenches from the front and right, and Gibbins, moving coolly about his new position, posted two of them so as to cover the approaches. The expected order to withdraw, however, had not yet reached Cass, and the extrication of the 53rd and other troops from their most perilous situation on his right front could not be commenced. The enemy bombers had now penetrated all trenches west of the roadway; Murray's last glimpse of one of his bombing posts had shown him the young officer lying motionless, with six or seven of his men grouped around him, their heads in the foul mud of the drain. Such Australians as had been left alive west of the road, without grenades, and with rifle-ammunition running out, were being gradually cut off from any hope of retreat. Arblaster and Matthews, who had led them throughout the night, both lay dangerously wounded. A few who had been isolated and surrounded were captured, and a momentary glimpse of a party of Australians being marched off between German soldiers as prisoners of war further shocked and incensed those who were still holding out. Murray at this stage made his way to Cass, and represented that the troops in his sector were being gradually faced with a situation in which they could only die or surrender. The only effective resistance was east of the road, where Gunter, with Sergeants Speakman<sup>104</sup> and McCurley<sup>105</sup> and others, now formed the real flank.



<sup>104</sup> Sgt. J. Speakman (No. 791; 54th Bn.). Engineer; of Leigh, Lancs., Eng.; b. Leigh, 5 Sept., 1889.

<sup>105</sup> Sgt. R. T. McCurley (No. 2557; 54th Bn.). School teacher; of Sydney; b. Port Macquarie, N.S.W., 1891.

While his force was thus being destroyed piecemeal, Cass was at 7.20 still waiting for the expected command. He reported that he had sent away the machine-guns, and that the Lewis guns were following:

Please arrange artillery to create barrage right around us, as enemy is bombing very heavily. His rifle fire is causing casualties and I cannot get wounded away. . . . No order to withdraw yet.

For some reason the order for withdrawal seems not to have been received by the 14th Brigade report-centre until 7.3, or by Cass until 7.50. The barrage around his position had been ordered long before, and began to fall at 5.40; and to the long delay which followed must be attributed the loss of a great part of Cass's right flank.<sup>106</sup> On receipt of the final order he at once passed the word for his men to move to the rear through the well-traversed trench across No-Man's Land, which, with the help of Captain Smythe's<sup>107</sup> company of the 56th and Captain Scott's<sup>108</sup> of the 5th Pioneers, had now been dug from four to six feet deep and duckboarded through to the old German front. At the first command to withdraw there was some disorganisation, part of the men around Cass's headquarters attempting to run across the open to their old trenches. The enemy turned upon them his machine-guns and they lost heavily.

Cass's warning order appears not to have reached the right centre or flank. The posts there had not been so severely tried, but they had seen the 8th Brigade retire, and Gibbins's company, as they then thought, fleeing back across the open. Yet when there came along the trench some second-hand order—possibly a version of Cass's directions, or of those given by McConaghy to Gibbins—they regarded the message as false, and would entertain no thought of withdrawal. "Retire be damned!", said those in the remaining posts. Presently, when they recognised that they were being gradually cut off by the intrusion of the enemy

<sup>106</sup> The decision to withdraw was arrived at after 5.15. Cass had received warning of its probability by 6.30. There is no record of the issue by divisional headquarters of the formal order to withdraw, but at 6.18 a message was despatched to the 8th and 15th Brigades informing them of it, and it appears to have been forwarded by the 14th Brigade Headquarters at 6.30, and by its advanced report-centre at 7.3, reaching Cass at 7.50.

<sup>107</sup> Capt. V. E. Smythe, M.C.; 56th Bn. Clerk; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Jerilderie, N.S.W., 20 Aug., 1894.

<sup>108</sup> Major E. I. C. Scott, D.S.O.; 5th Pioneer Bn. Insurance agent; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Kempsey, N.S.W., 24 July, 1873.



in rear of them, their attitude changed to one of seeking almost desperately for the right course of action, and looking anxiously for direction to any officer who could give it. "We've damn well got to do something quick," they said again and again, "and we'll do anything you like, if you'll say what's best." The whole action was a severe test of the new officers of an untried division; those without singular qualities of leadership were naturally perplexed, but throughout the struggle a few born leaders—including a high proportion of Duntroon "boys"—stood out like giants.

Each group had now to solve its difficulties for itself. In Agassiz' party two privates, Reay<sup>109</sup> and Gribbon,<sup>110</sup> volunteered, on their officer's suggestion, to make their way across the open to the nearest communication trench, which lay in their right rear, and ascertain whether the Germans who had previously been seen there were still holding it. The suspicion that they were doing so proved well-grounded; Gribbon was shot through the shoulder, and Reay mortally wounded. A third man, named Grimes,<sup>111</sup> then succeeded in finding an available trench farther to the left. Agassiz told them that they must use this, and fight their way out as best they could. "It looked stiff," said Stringfellow afterwards, "but we decided to try." He himself, after running and crawling fifty yards, was surrounded and captured; Agassiz and a few others escaped. Farther to the right some of the posts were warned by an order from Gunter (who had heard of the directions given to Gibbins) to steal away by small parties, bending low in the trenches and keeping far round to the left. The post under Lieutenant Lovejoy, which had duly received Cass's warning, still waited for the final word to withdraw. Three messengers, who were sent back for instructions, failed to return, and it was not until 8 o'clock that, perceiving the general retirement, Lovejoy and his men made a dash across the open to the rear.

From all sides the troops, having been told that they must "make a dash for it," were now bolting singly or in small

<sup>109</sup> Pte. J. G. Reay (No. 4885; 55th Bn.). Labourer; of Wallsend, N.S.W.; b. Wallsend, 1891. Died of wounds while prisoner of war, 26 July, 1916.

<sup>110</sup> Pte. G. Gribbon (No. 2728; 55th Bn.). Labourer; of Woonona, N.S.W.; b. Manchester, Eng., 1894.

<sup>111</sup> Pte. J. H. Grimes (No. 3237; 55th Bn.). Railway employee; of Ashfield, N.S.W.; b. Hawthorn, Vic., 11 July, 1885.



parties over the open towards the old German front line and the sap-head around which Gibbins and his rear-guard occupied a covering position. Others, including some of those carrying the Lewis guns, streamed towards it by the only communication trench that was still open. The bombers of the 56th, on the right,<sup>112</sup> being worn out with the exertion of throwing, had been allowed to withdraw, but under Cass's orders Major Cowey and Captain Woods, the adjutant of the 55th, following Denoon's plan, had bombed the Germans and were now standing ready with a small grenade-party beside the sap-head. After a number of the 14th Brigade had passed through, the enemy was seen approaching from the left. Colonel Cass and his adjutant, Captain Lowe,<sup>113</sup> were among the last to go. A party of the retiring Australians had to fight its way past the oncoming enemy, and the latest possible moment for safe withdrawal of the rear-guard was obviously at hand. "We were being hard pressed all the time until word came through to retire as far as our old front line," wrote a Lewis gunner<sup>114</sup> of that party afterwards. "At that time Captain Gibbins was but a few yards from me, and most of the infantry had retired. I was suddenly brought back to my senses by hearing Captain Gibbins call out: 'Come on, all you gunners.' I immediately picked up my spare parts and followed him." Gibbins was the last to leave the trench, and followed his men back along the sap until, on approaching the Australian line, he found it blocked by the wounded, and left the trench in order to walk over the parapet. "I saw him just reach the top of our trenches," wrote the gunner, "where he turned his head around sharply and was immediately struck in the head by a bullet and killed instantaneously."

So ended the ill-starred action at Fromelles. Not all the 14th Brigade had withdrawn. From the front-line posts Captain Murray of the 53rd, Lieutenants Harris, Gunter, and Morris<sup>115</sup> (scout officer, who acted as a company officer) of the 54th, and Agassiz of the 55th, with a fair proportion

<sup>112</sup> See p. 420.

<sup>113</sup> Capt. M. J. Lowe, 54th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Sydney; b. Ballyvourney, Co. Cork, Ireland, 17 Aug., 1872.

<sup>114</sup> Sgt. B. A. White (of Young, N.S.W.), 55th Bn. Lieut. Chapman of Gibbins's company was sniping the Germans until they came within bomb-range.

<sup>115</sup> Lieut.-Col. A. G. Morris, M.C.; 54th Bn. Bank clerk; of Sydney; b. Goulburn, N.S.W., 5 March, 1894.

of the unwounded troops, had got clear. A certain number went straight across the open No-Man's Land, retiring in short rushes under heavy fire. But Lieutenant Briggs of the 14th Machine Gun Company, who had held the next post to Agassiz, was never seen again; four officers of that company were killed and three wounded, and six out of its ten guns lost.<sup>116</sup> Lieutenant Burns,<sup>117</sup> finding himself surrounded, smashed his gun and with a few of his men tried to get back, but was killed.<sup>118</sup> Of the infantry, Lieutenant Lovejoy, on reaching the old German front line, found the enemy already coming along it "with armfuls of stick-bombs." He had time to despatch a dozen of his men through the same trench in the other direction when the escape of the remainder was prevented by German bombs. They took refuge in a communication trench through which were moving a number of Australians from the centre and right, including Lieutenants Folkard and Cummins.<sup>119</sup> The retreat of all these was cut off and, having no ammunition, they surrendered. Meanwhile, west of the road, where Arblaster and Matthews lay wounded, part of the advanced garrison, which with bayonets as its only weapons had continued to man its trench knee-deep in the mud, had found the Germans in communication trenches behind it. Captain Ranson, the senior officer remaining, upon endeavouring to find a way out, had been hit. As the men, possessing no means of defence, were simply being killed off by the advancing bombers, a white flag had been raised, and this party surrendered. A few scattered groups held out in an isolated position for some time longer,<sup>120</sup> from the Australian lines

<sup>116</sup> Some had been broken by shells.

<sup>117</sup> Lieut. R. D. Burns, 14th M.G. Coy. Pastoralist; of Parramatta, N.S.W.; b. Potts Point, N.S.W., 6 April, 1888. Killed in action, 20 July, 1916.

<sup>118</sup> Lieutenant A. C. Cox (of Mudgee, N.S.W.) had been killed before leaving the Australian trenches, and Lieutenant T. Hoddle-Wrigley (of Pakenham, Vic.) was shot through the head when crossing No-Man's Land. The casualties of this company were 11 killed, 28 wounded, 14 missing. In the 8th Machine Gun Company the casualties were 13 killed, 33 wounded, and 8 missing; in the 15th, 9 killed, 26 wounded, and 1 missing. (The war establishment of a machine-gun company was 10 officers and 142 other ranks.)

<sup>119</sup> Capt. G. Cummins, 55th Bn. School teacher; of Sydney; b. Port Macquarie, N.S.W., 17 June, 1886.

<sup>120</sup> As the enemy had now occupied the whole of his old front line, and parts of those in its rear, these men were hopelessly cut off. One of the Australian officers, endeavouring to save their lives, obtained permission of the Germans to go round and explain to them the situation. Those on one post, seeing him appear in company of two Germans who were guarding him, instantly shot the latter (such incidents were a common source of the allegations of treachery occasionally made against both sides). Another Australian, despite this officer's advice, most gallantly attempted to rush across to the Australian trenches, and almost immediately fell riddled with machine-gun bullets.

some of the 8th Brigade could be seen signalling for reinforcements. It was not until 9.20 that the Bavarian intelligence officer before-quoted notes:

The last of the Englishmen who were defending themselves have been captured.<sup>121</sup>

In the Australian trenches the scene was such that General Tivey, who, always solicitous for his men, had hurried thither on hearing of the retirement, could not hold back his tears. In spite of the clearance of wounded during the night by motor-ambulances working as far forward as the usual battalion headquarters,<sup>122</sup> the front line was now peopled with wounded and dying, among whom Chaplain Maxted,<sup>123</sup> working in his shirt-sleeves and without puttees, rendered, until he was killed, services of mercy never to be forgotten by those who benefited by them.<sup>124</sup> These were carried to the rear during the morning by the medical personnel of the 5th Division as well as of the New Zealand Division<sup>125</sup> and the 60th British Brigade, which sent officers and stretcher-bearers to assist. But many of the wounded

<sup>121</sup> Captain Arblaster, 53rd Battalion, died shortly afterwards in a German hospital. Many of those left in the German trenches were never seen again. Some men are said to have been shot after surrender, but on the whole the treatment after capture seems to have been fair. A lance-corporal of the 8th Machine Gun Company, T. Driscoll (of Botany, N.S.W.), who had been left wounded in the enemy trench was carried to the rear at 9 p.m. on July 20 by four Bavarians, who wrapped him in a ground-sheet and slung the sheet on a pole. He states: "They carried me through a heavy barrage of our machine-gun fire. At places they had to crawl on their hands and knees, but never showed the slightest hesitation. They had 'a bit of guts' about them—they were rare plucky men."

<sup>122</sup> The medical arrangements made by Colonel C. W. H. Hardy (of Ballarat, Vic.), A.D.M.S. of the 5th Australian Division, with the D.M.S., Second Army, worked well. It was actually found possible to bring motor-ambulances to "Rifle Villa," where Captain J. B. Metcalfe (of Wellington, N.S.W.) was in charge. The main dressing-stations were in a factory at Bac St. Maur (14th and 15th Field Ambulances, under Lieutenant-Colonels A. H. Tebbutt, of Sydney, and A. Horn, of Toowoomba, Q'land, respectively) and at Fort Rompu (8th Field Ambulance, under Colonel A. E. Shepherd, of Norwood, S. Aust.). In twenty-six hours 2,357 patients had been evacuated through the 2nd Australian Casualty Clearing Station at the railhead at Trois Arbres. By July 21 3,984 had been cleared. The institution of stalls with hot coffee and soup for the "walking wounded" (i.e., those who were able to walk and to be carried in ordinary transport) proved highly successful.

<sup>123</sup> Chaplain the Rev. S. E. Maxted, Clergyman; of Marrickville, N.S.W.; b. Forest Lodge, N.S.W., 1882. Killed in action, 20 July, 1916. (Maxted had served in Gallipoli as a stretcher-bearer. At Fromelles, in spite of those who urged him to keep to the rear areas, he insisted on remaining at the front, and made his way into No-Man's Land with the first stretcher-bearers. In the trying march of the 14th Brigade across the desert from Tel el Kebir, though entitled to ride, he had walked with his battalion, the 54th.)

<sup>124</sup> Chaplains the Rev. J. J. Kennedy (of Myrtleford, Vic.), J. P. Gilbert (of Queenstown, Tas., and Coogee, N.S.W.), and others also constantly worked among the wounded under fire.

<sup>125</sup> The New Zealand Division had assisted in the actual operation by undertaking two trench-raids. Both were successful.



lay beyond the front line. The four trenches which had been dug into No-Man's Land in the sectors of the several brigades were full of helpless men. Especially in front of the 15th Brigade, around the Laies, the wounded could be seen everywhere raising their limbs in pain or turning hopelessly, hour after hour, from one side to the other. The German artillery was now crashing upon the Australian front line, and the crowding of the enemy along his trenches caused Colonel Clark of the 30th to suspect that a counter-attack across No-Man's Land was imminent. The whole divisional front was then held by three half-battalions; but, in the case of the 8th Brigade, these troops had been through the fight and were reported by one of their officers as "absolutely unnerved" and "unfitted for further resistance." M'Cay, though not believing the danger to be serious, ordered a counter-bombardment to be laid on the German front line until midday, when, the artillerymen on both sides being worn out, the guns ceased.

There followed a stillness never again experienced by the 5th Division in the front trenches. The sight of the wounded lying tortured and helpless in No-Man's Land, within a stone's throw of safety but apparently without hope of it, made so strong an appeal that Major Murdoch<sup>120</sup> of the 29th Battalion decided to risk his life and his military career in an effort which might result in rescuing every wounded man. A Red-Cross flag, improvised by tacking some red cloth upon a board covered with newspaper, was waved above the parapet in order to gain the enemy's attention; and then, with a private of his battalion, named Miles,<sup>127</sup> Murdoch crossed No-Man's Land to the German wire. They carried with them a large number of waterbottles, which they distributed to the wounded on the way over. The parapets on both sides were crowded with soldiers watching, and, on reaching the enemy wire, Murdoch asked for an officer. A Bavarian lieutenant "immaculately dressed,"<sup>128</sup> emerged, and Major Murdoch asked if an informal truce could be arranged to enable the wounded to be collected. The Bavarian replied

<sup>120</sup> Major A. W. Murdoch, 29th Bn. Business manager; of Middle Brighton, Vic.; b. Benalla, Vic., 5 Feb., 1873.

<sup>127</sup> Pte. H. N. Miles (No. 2605; 8th L.T.M. Bty.). Draper; of Warragul, Vic.; b. Ararat, Vic., 1884.

<sup>128</sup> *The Story of the Fifth Australian Division*, by Captain A. D. Ellis, p. 111.



courteously enough, regretting that he had no authority to give any order to that effect, and saying that he would telephone for instructions. Upon his doing so, a reply was received from the headquarters of his brigade or division agreeing to the proposal on condition that the Australian stretcher-bearers should work only in their own half of No-Man's Land, the wounded in the German half being cleared by German stretcher-bearers. As a bond of good faith Murdoch, after consulting his own division, was to come back blindfolded to the German trenches, to be held there as hostage until the collection was finished. Murdoch at once carried back this proposal,<sup>129</sup> which was telephoned to M'Cay's headquarters. In the meanwhile, except for the occasional discharge of a gun in the rear area, hostilities had ceased, the informal truce having spread to the whole battle-front, and the garrison of both sides were engaged—the Australians in bringing in some of the wounded, and the Germans in repairing their front trench. Near the Laies, where the Australian wounded lay thick, the Germans began to go over their parapets, apparently in order to bring in the men lying nearest to them. A message was accordingly sent by the 15th Brigade asking the artillery to stop any of its guns which was then firing.

In the meanwhile the proposal reached M'Cay. He, however, was aware that "G.H.Q. orders and all subordinate orders were extremely definite,<sup>130</sup> to the effect that no negotiations of any kind, and on any subject, were to be had with the enemy. . . . In view of the definiteness of G.H.Q. orders, as soon as my headquarters became aware of the tentative arrangement, orders were at once sent to put an end to the 'truce.'" Generals Haking and Monro, to whom he mentioned the matter afterwards, approved of his action. M'Cay may have thought, possibly with reason, that the Germans would use a request for a truce as propaganda to magnify the effect of their victory. In any case, even if he disagreed with the settled policy of his chiefs, he could not disobey their orders or even temporise, unless he was prepared to go back to his country and—at the risk of raising

<sup>129</sup> He and Miles, in spite of a remonstrance by the Germans, had, while waiting near the German wire, distributed among the wounded their remaining water-bottles.

<sup>130</sup> The quotation is from a letter from General M'Cay, written long afterwards.

internal dissension in a perilous time—justify his action before its people. The horror of knowing that a mate—his living body the prey of flies and ants—is being slowly done to death within two minutes of the succour to which, without military disadvantage, he could be brought, is less present to distant staffs than to officers and men in the line, and was estimated (though doubtless only after severe internal conflict) as a trifle when balanced against the mighty issues at stake; yet the memory of such horrors lingering in millions of minds unquestionably leads sometimes, in the long run, to results beside which even the great war-time issues may seem unimportant. A great part of both the nation and the army would probably have favoured a policy more rigidly consistent with the principles of chivalry and humanity, for which the Allies genuinely stood, but a divisional general can hardly be blamed for rigid adherence to the orders of the commander-in-chief.<sup>131</sup>

Upon M'Cay's order reaching the front line, the stretcher-bearers were stopped from going out. No shots were fired at the Sugar-loaf, where the Germans were still out among the wounded, and all artillery-fire was abated, but a desultory sniping was resumed by both sides elsewhere.

Then was seen, along the whole front of the 5th Division, that magnificent tribute of devotion which the Australian soldier never failed to pay to his mates. For three days and nights, taking the chance of wounds and death, single men and parties continued to go out in answer to the appeal from No-Man's Land. On the night of July 20th the work was organised, all battalions, including the pioneers, sending out stretcher-bearing parties, by which no less than 300 were rescued, chiefly opposite the 15th Brigade, whose wounded lay in swaths along the rises or crowded in the ditches. The work is vividly described in a letter from Sergeant Fraser<sup>132</sup> of the 57th:

I must say Fritz (*i.e.*, the German) treated us very fairly, though a few were shot at the work. Some of these wounded were as game

<sup>131</sup> It is now known that Haig admitted the need for truces on certain exceptional occasions, but feared a regular system which might give the enemy at critical moments a chance to recover and bring up reserves. It is interesting to note that no reference to this incident appears to have found its way into the official records either of the Australian or of the German division. It may be inferred that both sides felt conscious of having indulged in negotiations which might draw the frowns of their respective G.H.Q.

<sup>132</sup> Lieut. S. Fraser, 58th Bn. Farmer; of Byaduk, Vic.; b. Byaduk, 31 Dec., 1876. Killed in action, 11 May, 1917.

as lions, and got rather roughly handled; but haste was more necessary than gentle handling. . . . It was no light work getting in with a heavy weight on your back, especially if he had a broken leg or arm and no stretcher-bearer was handy. You had to lie down and get him on your back; then rise and duck for your life with a chance of getting a bullet in you before you were safe. One foggy morning in particular, I remember, we could hear someone over towards the German entanglements calling for a stretcher-bearer; it was an appeal no man could stand against, so some of us rushed out and had a hunt. We found a fine haul of wounded and brought them in; but it was not where I heard this fellow calling, so I had another shot for it, and came across a splendid specimen of humanity trying to wriggle into a trench<sup>133</sup> with a big wound in his thigh. He was about 14 stone weight, and I could not lift him on my back; but I managed to get him into an old trench, and told him to lie quiet while I got a stretcher. Then another man about 30 yards out sang out "Don't forget me, cobber." I went in and got four volunteers with stretchers, and we got both men in safely. Next morning at daylight, whilst observing over the parapet, I saw two figures in their shirts and no hats, running about half-way between our lines and the Germans. They were our captains, Cameron<sup>134</sup> and Marshall, hunting for more wounded.<sup>135</sup>

The shattered assault-battalions were collected on the afternoon of July 20th in the roads near their respective brigade headquarters.<sup>136</sup> Of the 60th Battalion, which had gone into the fight with 887 officers and men, only one officer and 106 men answered the call. The 32nd, 59th, and 53rd

<sup>133</sup> That is, one of the unfinished excavations in No-Man's Land.

<sup>134</sup> Major (temp. Lieut.-Col.) H. G. L. Cameron, D.S.O., M.C.; 56th Bn. Analyst and assayer; of Sydney; b. Kew, Vic., 27 Jan., 1880.

<sup>135</sup> A young intelligence officer of the 15th Brigade, Lieut. R. A. Salmon (of Ballarat, Vic.), also was conspicuous in this work. The rescuers would often mark during the day the direction of a wounded man, and subsequently go out to him at dusk. C.S.M. J. M. Thorburn (of Northcote, Vic.), however, and Sergeant A. G. Ross (of Colac, Vic.) of the 57th, Corporals W. J. Brown (of Daylesford, Vic.) and W. G. Davis (of Richmond, Vic.), and Privates E. Williams (of Ouyen, Vic.) and W. P. McDonnell (of Melbourne) of the 58th, and many others went out boldly by day. Working thus under fire, Brown and Davis brought in no less than six of the wounded. As they were carrying the last of these over the parapet an enemy bullet killed the man on the stretcher and severely wounded Brown. Bearers sometimes endeavoured to apprise the enemy of the nature of their work by holding the stretchers over their heads, but so many were wounded that they were eventually forbidden to go out by day, although a few of the wounded remained. Opposite the Sugar-loaf, where for several days men could be seen moving—one in particular blinded and distraught by a wound across the forehead, kept walking in circles, falling, and walking on again—the Germans did not rescue them or allow their opponents to do so, although Ross and several others made the attempt. The enemy was seen eventually to shoot down or bomb some of these, including the blind man. This may have been done with a view to ending their sufferings, although many Australian soldiers held a different opinion and feeling became very bitter. A partial explanation of the enemy's reason for firing upon stretcher-parties may perhaps lie in the fact that at one time rifles as well as wounded were collected. There is also a statement of the intelligence officer of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division, who reported on July 21 to Sixth Army: "The enemy . . . opened infantry and machine-gun fire on us while we rescued our and their wounded." If this happened by error in one part, an order would probably be issued prohibiting further attempts at rescue.

<sup>136</sup> The signallers of the division also were almost worn out. The despatch riders, using motor-cycles, delivered 505 sealed packages on July 19 and 299 on the 20th.



had suffered almost as heavily. A few of the missing at the roll-call came in afterwards; but the 5th Division had lost in one night's sharp fighting 5,533 officers and men, and the 61st Division (which was of less strength) 1,547. Among the Australians, by far the heaviest casualties had occurred on the flanks, the attacking battalions from left to right suffering as follows:<sup>137</sup>

		Officers.		Other ranks.
32nd Battalion	..	17	..	701
31st Battalion	..	16	..	528
54th Battalion	..	19	..	521
53rd Battalion	..	24	..	601
60th Battalion	..	16	..	741
59th Battalion	..	20	..	675

The German loss appears to have been under 1,500, the 17th Regiment, which opposed the British attack, losing 269, and the 21st, which opposed the Australians, 775. In the latter regiment, the III Battalion which had originally held the front line, was so shattered that it was subsequently withdrawn for a long period, its place being taken on July 21st by the III/104th, a Saxon unit from opposite Armentières.

The British captured 140 prisoners, of whom about 100 were taken by the 5th Division. The Germans captured 16 machine-guns and 481 prisoners, 10 of the machine-guns and about 400 of the men being Australian. They were taken to Lille, marched through the suburbs and city in order to impress the French,<sup>138</sup> and then interrogated. The prisoners' answers to their questions read much like those of German prisoners captured by the British; but the process was hardly necessary, for, either on a prisoner or on one of the dead, the Germans had found a copy of Haking's order, which told them all they desired to know, including what they must in any case have almost immediately discovered—the true object of the operation.

In spite, therefore, of consolatory messages received by the 5th Division from the higher commanders to the effect

<sup>137</sup> The losses of officers and men respectively in the other battalions were: 29th, 7-209; 30th, 9-343; 55th, 11-330; 56th, 2-149; 57th, 2-33; 58th, 11-237. The machine-gun companies lost: 8th, 5-49; 14th, 7-46; 15th, 2-34.

<sup>138</sup> The French inhabitants, who made demonstrations of sympathy, and tried to give the prisoners chocolate and cigarettes, were roughly handled by the Uhlans. The prisoners were afterwards distributed to German prison camps, where their treatment varied from reasonably good to very bad. Several eventually escaped and made their way across Germany to the Dutch or other neutral frontiers.



that, through its effort, the Germans would certainly be prevented from moving troops from that area to the Somme, the actual result was to inform the enemy that only a feint was intended. The normal inference would be that he could now move his troops without fear.

This result was not unforeseen by the leaders of the A.I.F., who regarded it as almost certain, whether the operation tactically succeeded or failed. It is recorded in the private diary of an Australian official, under the date July 17th, that General White, chief of Birdwood's staff, then in the Somme area, had that day expressed to the diarist his strong hope that the operation would be indefinitely postponed. He held that the British staff, in imagining that the German command would seriously regard such an attack without reserves behind it, was rating the enemy's intelligence too low.

I hate these unprepared little shows (he said). What do we do? We may deceive the enemy for two days; and, after that, he knows perfectly well that it is not a big attack, and that we are not in earnest there. We don't get anything that does us any good—the trenches are hard to keep, and it would mean the breaking up (*i.e.*, the smashing) of two divisions.<sup>139</sup>

The impression actually made on the enemy may perhaps be judged from the comment of a German newspaper critic:<sup>140</sup>

Even yesterday we were inclined to think that the English would launch a new powerful offensive west of Lille; but to-day we learn

<sup>139</sup> General Elliott also appears to have expressed strong apprehensions, based upon the circular just received from G.H.Q. (*see p. 338*), which warned commanders that attacks could not succeed unless the "jumping-off" position was within 200 yards of the enemy's trench. As Elliott's troops would have to advance between 350 and 420 yards from their own trenches, he was much depressed by the obvious danger of failure, and, having been on the front only ten days, sought the opinion of someone more experienced. Some days before the attack he reconnoitred No-Man's Land with Major Howard of the British staff, and on returning from the front pointed out to him that, according to the axiom laid down in the G.H.Q. circular, the attack could not succeed. There is evidence that Major Howard's own opinion was the same, and was contrary to that which unfortunately prevailed. It is fair, however, to point out that Haking endeavoured to meet the difficulty involved in the width of No-Man's Land by sending out his lines to approach the German trenches before the bombardment lifted; and that it was the failure of the bombardment to stifle the enemy, and not the width of No-Man's Land, which was the primary cause of the repulse. The doubt held by the staff at G.H.Q. throughout appears to have concerned the adequacy of the bombardment; and that doubt was settled by the assurance of Haking, supported by Monro, that the ammunition and guns sufficed for the operation.

<sup>140</sup> "Medicus" in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 22 July, 1916. A German war-correspondent, W. Scheurmann, in the *North German Gazette* of 3 August, 1916, wrote an account of the battle in which he stated: "The English troops who took part in this action were Australians. For the most part they are war-volunteers, and amongst them were very many well-to-do farmers—strong, youthful men, who undoubtedly attacked with great bravery, and proved themselves clever and tenacious in close fighting." He added that the Australian officers "made a good impression and were superior in education and bearing to the average. . . . The bravery of the men and their stamina is undoubted. They were nothing like so much afraid of the horrors of grenade fighting" as most newly-recruited soldiers whom the Germans had met.

that it evidently came to an attack only on an adjoining sector which the English suspected of being weakly occupied.

It is true that the comment of the German Sixth Army staff upon the contents of Haking's order was: "A repetition of these attacks is, therefore, to be expected." This impression was, of course, false—the most reckless commander would not have continued to throw away 7,000 troops in a night for so small a result; but, inasmuch as the decisions of the German staff may for a few days have been based on this belief, the feint cannot with certainty be judged to have been completely ineffective. Yet the value of the result, if any, was tragically disproportionate to the cost.

The reasons for this failure seem to have been loose thinking and somewhat reckless decision on the part of the higher staff. Had the heavy British howitzers continued ostentatious registration without the activity having ever culminated in an actual attack, or had it been possible for the unprepared enemy to be shocked by a strong, well-prepared, and successful blow (such as that delivered at Lone Pine, the most effective feint ever undertaken by Australian infantry), the Germans might have been deceived at a price not disproportionate to the value of the result; but it is difficult to conceive that the operation, as planned, was ever likely to succeed.

Haking attributed its failure solely to the newness of the infantry.<sup>141</sup> But this explanation can hardly be accepted, ignoring as it does the additional factors—that the German riflemen and machine-guns fired both through and after the bombardment; that the losses at starting were consequently enormous, especially in officers; and that the objective which Haking had set for his force proved to be a series of abandoned and water-filled trenches and ditches. The verdict of the military student will much more probably be that the well-known difficulties of a narrow-fronted offensive in trench-warfare had been too lightly faced. The attacking

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<sup>141</sup> He wrote:

"The artillery preparation was adequate. There were sufficient guns and sufficient ammunition. The wire was properly cut, and the assaulting battalions had a clear run into the enemy's trenches.

"The Australian infantry attacked in the most gallant manner and gained the enemy's position, but they were not sufficiently trained to consolidate the ground gained. They were eventually compelled to withdraw and lost heavily in doing so.

"The 61st Division were not sufficiently imbued with the offensive spirit to

troops were possibly unfortunate in meeting a German division of pre-eminently excellent morale; and the insertion, through inexperience, in M'Cay's orders of the clause ordering the troops to vacate the first trench after they had cleared it, undoubtedly contributed to the causes of failure. The troops were admittedly raw; but it may be doubted if any infantry in the world could have crossed No-Man's Land where the 15th Brigade failed; and the completion of the communication trench and of nearly the whole of the new firing-line across No-Man's Land during the night under intense fire was an achievement not often matched in the history of such actions.<sup>142</sup> Even, however, with such communication established across No-Man's Land, it may be doubted whether Haking's force—or at least the 8th and 14th Brigades—could have held on after the morning mists had cleared. The enemy's directed artillery-fire, increased as it would be by his additional heavy batteries, had still to be experienced. The whole Australian position, including the finished and partly-finished trenches

go in like one man at the appointed time. Some parts of the attack were late deploying. . . .

"With two trained divisions the position would have been a gift after the artillery bombardment. . . .

"I think the attack, although it failed, has done both divisions a great deal of good, and I am quite sure as a result of the attack that the Germans are not likely to move troops away from this front for some time.

"It was absolutely necessary to use the two new divisions, because it would not have been practicable to move any other divisions into the position in the time available. . . ."

In another report he stated:

"The attack of the Australian division . . . was carried out in an exceptionally gallant manner. There is no doubt that the men advanced with the greatest determination. Their difficulties on the right flank were caused by the failure of the 61st Division to carry the Sugar-loaf."

It is only fair, however, to remember that the 61st Division, like the Australians, was faced with machine-guns which under Haking's plan should have been suppressed, but which fired through the barrage. The opinion of the staff at G.H.Q. may possibly be inferred from the fact that war correspondents, after the attack, were asked to refrain from describing the British preparatory bombardment as intense, since this would be inaccurate.

<sup>142</sup> These trenches are shown in the plates 31 and 32. The communication trench dug by the 14th Field Company, 56th Battalion, and Captain Scott's company of the 5th Pioneer Battalion, was 195 yards long, from 4 to 6 feet in depth, and, except for 25 yards at the Australian end, was duckboarded throughout. The new firing line on the extreme left, dug by the 8th Field Company and 30th Battalion, was 175 yards long, 6 feet in depth at the Australian end, and 3 ft. 6 in. near the enemy's. For the last twenty yards only pot-holes existed. The two trenches in the 15th Brigade area were, of course, unfinished. That dug by a party under Lieutenant Noedl formed an extension of Pinney's Avenue, and was 219 yards long, averaged 3 ft. 6 in. deep, and was duckboarded for 60 yards. The other, an extension of V.C. Avenue, was 90 yards long, 30 yards being duckboarded. The engineer companies lost: 8th, 1 officer and 36 other ranks; 14th, 1-21; 15th, 1-27. Lieutenant C. P. Tenbosch (of Sydney, N.S.W., and Liverpool, Eng.) of the 8th Field Company was killed at the beginning of the action.



across No-Man's Land, would lie directly under the eyes of his observers on Fromelles ridge. He had brought from other parts of his line two battalions of infantry and two heavy batteries,<sup>143</sup> none of which were employed before the Australians were withdrawn, and whose onslaught must have been met, with grenades running short, even had the earlier attack been thrown back.

In accordance with the policy at this time adopted by G.H.Q., the severity of this reverse, though of course well known to the German Army and people, was concealed from the British public in the official *communiqué*:

Yesterday evening, south of Armentières, we carried out some important raids on a front of two miles in which Australian troops took part. About 140 German prisoners were captured.

The *communiqué* issued by the German headquarters was—as usual when German troops were successful, but not otherwise—fairly accurate. The 6th Bavarian Reserve Division was specially congratulated by the Kaiser, the King of Bavaria, and Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, commanding the Sixth Army. The main facts soon became known in Australia, and went far to shake the confidence of part of the public in the British official statements, which at first had been accepted as invariably true. Moreover, since the Australian nation does not differ from other democracies in its tendency to search for scapegoats, and a small section of the press saw no unfairness in publishing, then or since, without verification, damning statements or implications mainly contained in soldiers' letters—the blame for the enterprise was thrown upon an unpopular but entirely innocent leader, General M'Cay. It is probably true that in the case of the Fromelles offensive M'Cay welcomed the early chance of commanding his division in action; but, even had he been as thoroughly opposed to it as were White and Birdwood, the general appeal made by his superiors<sup>144</sup> for assistance to the

<sup>143</sup> The commander of the Sixth German Army, on receiving news of the attack, had placed one battalion of the XIX Corps (3/104th Regiment, with the 134th Machine Gun Company) and one of the XXVII Reserve Corps (25th Jagers) at the disposal of the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division, and also ordered the Guard Reserve Corps to withdraw one "heavy field-howitzer" battery (5.9-inch) and one *Mörser* battery (8-inch), and send them north. None of these reinforcements, however, were used during the actual battle. The army commander ordered that they should be returned as soon as possible in view of the demands of the general situation. The infantry appears to have been sent back by July 22, and the artillery about July 26.

<sup>144</sup> See p. 328.



force struggling on the Somme might well have prevented any opposition on his part to the plans of his superiors. The case of M'Cay may indeed stand as a classic example in Australia of the gross injustice of such popular verdicts, he having been loaded with the blame for three costly undertakings—the charge of the 2nd Brigade at Cape Helles,<sup>145</sup> the desert march of the 5th Division, and the attack at Fromelles—for none of which was he, in fact, any more responsible than the humblest private in his force, while in the case of the desert march he had actually protested against the order. His security in his command was not in any way shaken by the popular error—the authorities of the A.I.F. being well aware of the truth.

The 5th Australian Division was crippled by the fight at Fromelles, and not until the end of the summer, when it raided the German trenches frequently and successfully, did it regain its full self-confidence. A particularly unfortunate, but almost inevitable, result of the fight was that, having been unwisely combined with a British division whose value for offence, in spite of the devoted gallantry of many of its members,<sup>146</sup> was recognised as doubtful, the Australian soldiers tended to accept the judgment—often unjust, but already deeply impressed by the occurrences at the Suvla landing—that the “Tommies” could not be relied upon to uphold a flank in a stiff fight.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>145</sup> See *Vol. II*, p. 42.

<sup>146</sup> The fate of Captain Church, and of several other officers, whose bodies, with those of their parties, were long afterwards found lying near the German wire, proves the quality of parts of this division.

<sup>147</sup> A number of changes occurred in the Australian commands after this battle. Colonel Cass, already heavily strained by his sufferings at Helles (see *Vol. II*, pp. 22-23), and after having most heroically withstood for more than twelve hours in the enemy's trench the overwhelming stress of the main command in that area, completely broke down, and was invalided home. Colonel Pope, on disciplinary grounds not affecting the control of his brigade during the action, was returned to Australia, but was afterwards appointed to the 52nd Battalion, which he led into the Battle of Messines in 1917. On the recommendation of General Godley, the command of the 14th Brigade was given to Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Hobkirk. Major R. H. Beardsmore was appointed to command the 32nd Battalion; Major O. M. Croshaw the 53rd; Major C. J. Holdorf the 54th; Major C. A. Denehy the 58th; Major H. T. C. Layh the 59th; and Major H. M. Duigan the 60th.

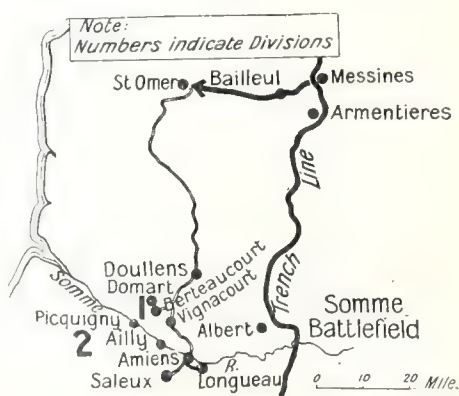
## CHAPTER XIV

### OPERATIONS AT POZIÈRES—JULY 14TH TO 22ND

DURING the sudden preparation for the action at Fromelles the three divisions of the I Anzac Corps, ignorant almost to a man of what was happening in the north, had concentrated in the quiet area twenty-five miles west of the Somme battle-front. After marching to the Flemish abbey-town of St. Omer, they had been carried by train, the 1st Division to the old defended borough of Doullens, eighteen miles north of Amiens, and the 2nd to Longueau and Saleux, a few miles south-east and south-west respectively of the same city. The 1st,

as it arrived, marched off to billets in the villages of Domart and Berteaucourt; the 2nd passed at intervals on July 11th and 12th through the streets of Amiens to Ailly, Picquigny, and neighbour-

ing villages in the beautiful and peaceful valley of the Somme.<sup>1</sup> Amiens was then a miniature Paris, far beyond shell-range, practically undamaged, the important streets and boulevards thronged with a bright population not visibly affected by the war; hotels, shops, cafés, *cabarets*, and newspaper kiosks carried on a brisk trade, the light blue uniforms of the French brightening the sombre crowds of black-coated civilians and khaki-clad British. From many of the rolling hill-slopes on which the Australians drilled, the faint blue-grey shape of the cathedral could be seen rising high above the mists of the valley. The surrounding region was largely rolling pasture-land, much more open than the crowded agricultural lowlands of Flanders. The farmers lived chiefly in the villages, many of whose streets were bordered by barns



<sup>1</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 190.

with rough timber roof-beams and cracked walls of white-washed mud and straw. The back gardens and orchards with their protecting hedges and copses gave to each hamlet, from the distance, the appearance of a wood.<sup>2</sup> The wheatfields were ripe, their edges brilliant with poppies and corn-flowers. The woods, which were few and small but well tended, were thick with their dark summer foliage.

The people of Picardy, having harboured a succession of divisions, each of which had moved away after a few days, at first seemed somewhat less friendly than those of Flanders: prices of chocolate and other trifles in the tiny shops appeared excessively high. Moreover the frequent changes and the crowding of units into poor hamlets, especially in areas near the front, rendered some of the billets dirty and uncomfortable. The kindness of the villagers, however, soon shone through these conditions, and there sprang up between them and the Australians a strong mutual affection and admiration which, as in Flanders, was the cause of some remarkable scenes in the last year of the war.

The Anzac headquarters, down to those of the brigades, having since their arrival in France been provided with fleets of powerful touring motor-cars, made the move from the north by road, most officers travelling by car, clerks and orderlies following in lorries which brought the office furniture and stores. Thus Birdwood's headquarters were transferred on the morning of July 10th from Bailleul to Vignacourt, in the centre of the concentration area. The 1st Division moved almost at once into the same village and those around it, leaving Domart and Berteaucourt vacant for the 4th, whose infantry began to arrive from the north on July 13th. Having left its artillery at Armentières, the 4th had been provided with the British regular artillery of the Lahore Division, whose infantry had some time previously left France.<sup>3</sup>

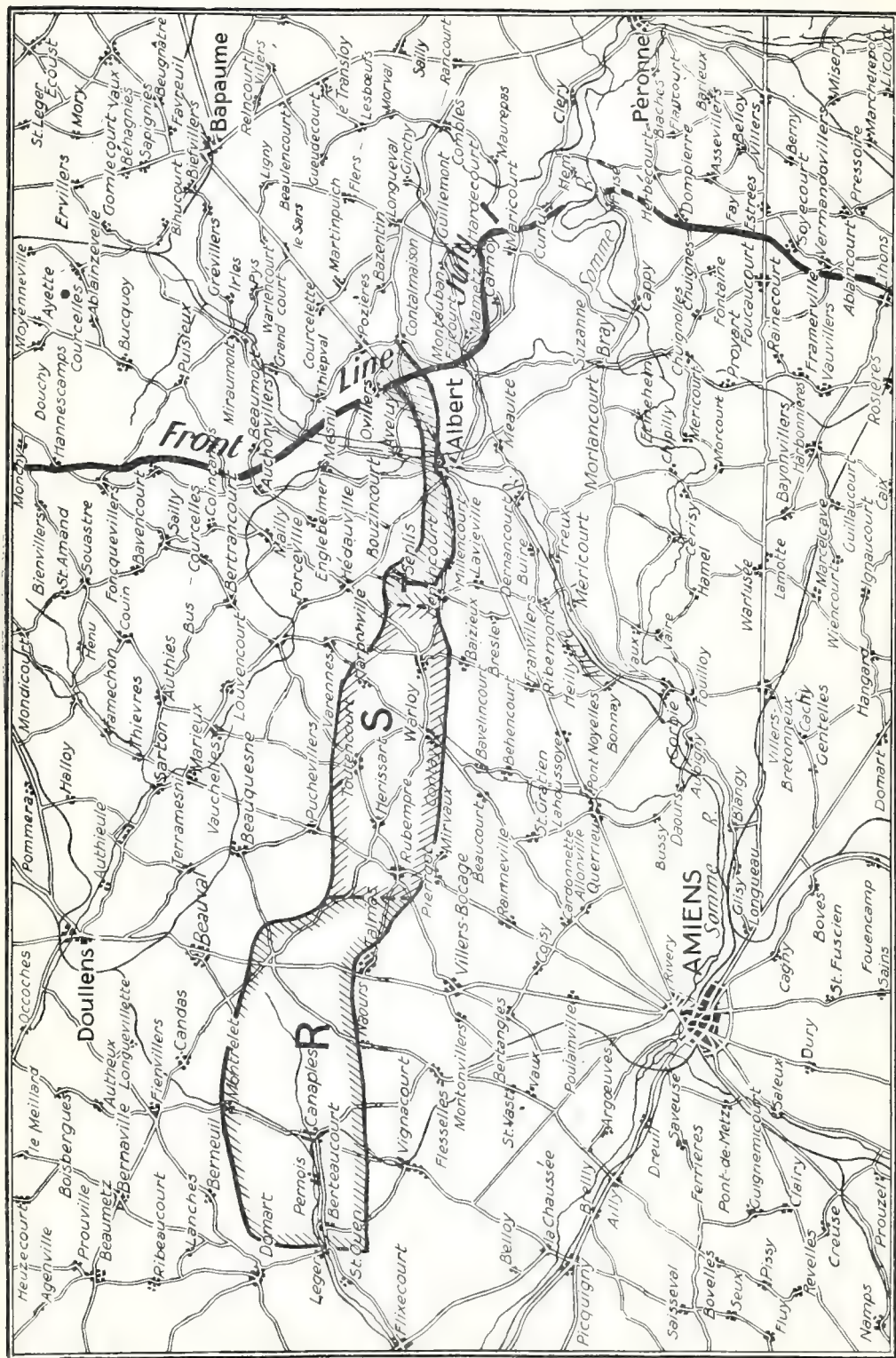
Thus by July 14th there had been concentrated in the area west of the Amiens-Doullens road the three divisions of the I Anzac Corps, all keen, like their predecessors in the district, to be moved into the Somme battle. "They usually stay here

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<sup>2</sup> See plate No. 33.

<sup>3</sup> This artillery had recently been attached to the 3rd Canadian Division south-east of Ypres, whose own gunners had for a time been left to train in England but had now joined up.





THE BACK AREA ALLOTTED TO THE I ANZAC CORPS ON THE SOMME IN JULY-AUGUST 1916 FOR REST, TRAINING, ETC.  
The area of the above map is 38 miles by 25.



about three days," said the Town Major<sup>4</sup> at Vignacourt to a group of junior officers of the I Anzac Corps, who were lunching at the small village inn on the morning of their arrival. Yet when, on July 13th, the 1st Division moved a stage eastwards, there was a perceptible sadness among many of the inhabitants, who of late had watched many similar units march away, to return a week or two later lacking a large proportion of the familiar jolly faces.

From the day when the Australian troops had arrived in the area, a certain number of the staff and senior regimental officers had, by permission, been making excursions of the utmost interest to the scene of the great battle, twenty-five miles to the east. Here they found themselves among defences no longer of the sandbag-breastwork type to which they had grown accustomed in Flanders, but genuine trenches, dug deep in earth or chalk, and, with their output looking like mole-hills, across hill and valley.<sup>5</sup> Examining the old German positions near Fricourt and La Boisselle, where the line of each trench was in some places represented only by a trodden pad, winding through a barely-traceable depression in the crater-field, they received at one glance a lasting impression of the obliterating bombardments which characterised the latest phase of warfare. At the same time the survival—in spite of a few splintered entrances—of the dark timbered shafts leading down to deep dugouts, and the presence, among the exposed foundations that had once been La Boisselle, of half-ruined cellars reeking with the foul acid-sweet smell of the dead, told of the resistance to be expected from German garrisons, even after such a test. British soldiers engaged in the current fighting, when asked its nature, referred constantly to the enemy's "barrage," a new and predominant battle-condition, as yet known only vaguely and by name to most Australian troops. It appeared that the "barrage" resembled a curtain, or fence, which, when they attacked, might be dropped at any time in rear of them. When once the barrage fell, everything on the forward side of it was

<sup>4</sup> The designation of the British officers controlling the billeting arrangements and certain other relations with the inhabitants. The positions were filled by elderly officers, or by those otherwise incapable of more active service.

<sup>5</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plates 201, 228.

cut off and hidden until such time as it was raised again. If it fell in the rear areas, ambulances or supply-waggons on their way towards the fighting troops must stop and wait; if it fell close behind an attack, it cut off the attacking waves from their reserves, and brigade head-quarters from its assaulting troops. As soon as the Germans had news of an assault, they would lay down this barrage so that the reserves should be held up and they would have only the front waves of the attack to deal with. It followed that the only sure method by which British commanders could ascertain the fate of their assaults, and the position of the advanced line, was by "contact" aeroplanes, one or more of which, at stated intervals after the first advance, would fly low over the battle-front, sometimes sounding a Klaxon horn to attract the attention of the troops below. The latter were provided either with flares to be burnt in shell-holes out of view of the enemy, or with mirrors with which they could flash to the airman when they saw him. Experiments had been made with small, bright tin discs sewn upon the back of the men's tunics. These were usually visible to the airman; but the method, though helpful to the air force, was detested by the infantry, who imagined that the discs were easily detected by the enemy. The troops were also told that, if they rolled up their sleeves to the elbow and waved their arms, the contact airman would distinguish them, and this was a method which they much preferred.

Besides introducing the British Army to the enemy's barrage as a constant dominant condition,<sup>6</sup> the battle was, at terrible cost, educating the staffs of both sides to a more skilful employment of the barrage in attack. The British were beginning to recognise that a bombardment thrown far ahead was little protection to attacking infantry, and big "lifts" of the barrage had been followed by failure. For this reason assaults were now being made in several short stages, with a succession of objectives. When the infantry attacked the first objective, the barrage was lengthened to fall upon the second, which was so close in front that the bombardment falling upon it was a sufficient protection for the infantry "consolidating" the first. The bombardment

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<sup>6</sup> Heavy barrages had, of course, been experienced in other battles.

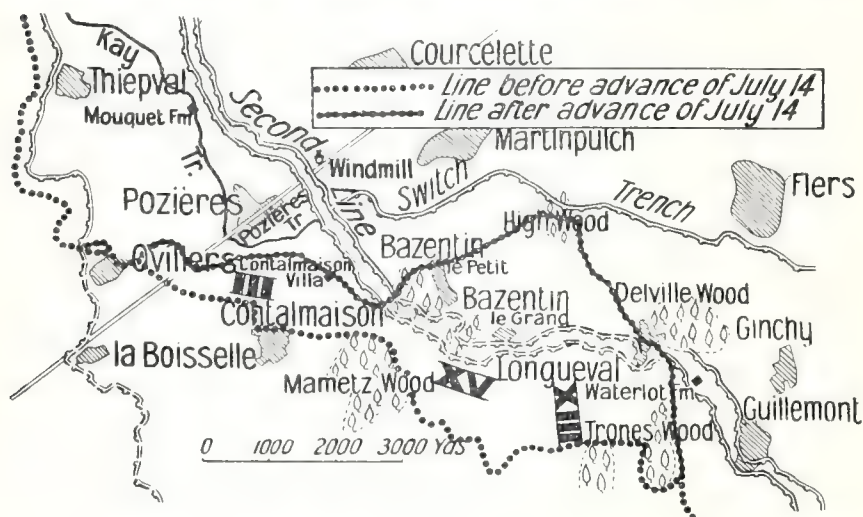
was thus serving two purposes, first to destroy the enemy's trench next to be attacked, and second to force the nearest enemy to keep his head down, thus protecting the infantry from counter-attack while they dug in or "consolidated"—that is, converted the captured trench into a position suitable for themselves. After allowing time for the first objective to be thus rendered defensible, the barrage moved from the second objective to the third, the attacking troops at the same instant advancing upon the second—and so forth until the assault ended, when the barrage would for a time rest 100 or 200 yards ahead of the men digging in at their final objective. Troops were now taught that before attacking they must creep as close to the objective as their own bombardment would permit, even at the risk of a few casualties from their own shells, so that, upon observing the lift of the artillery-fire from the enemy's trench, they could instantly advance and enter it before the garrison had set up its machine-guns. It was perhaps not sufficiently realised that the possibility of applying this bold method depended largely upon the spirit and temperament, and also the freshness, of the troops. Also, if the bombardment was insufficient, the enemy might stand to arms in spite of the shell-fire<sup>7</sup> and defeat even the swiftest attack. To prevent positions, when once captured, from being lost by enemy counter-attack, it was now the rule that each objective should be attacked by a separate line of men.<sup>8</sup> Thus the first line, on capturing the first objective, was left to consolidate and hold that objective, while the second line, sweeping through it, lay up a little beyond, close behind the barrage, and presently attacked and consolidated the second objective. If there were a third, a third line would then move through, ready to carry out the assault upon it. An additional precaution now being adopted was for special parties of engineers to follow shortly after the assaulting waves, with the duty of constructing in each objective fixed "strong-points," in which, even if surrounded by enemy counter-attack, troops might still hold out. These lessons were hurriedly learned by the Australian staff and commanders from those engaged in the battle and from

<sup>7</sup> As the Bavarians in the Sugar-loaf did at Fromelles.

<sup>8</sup> Each line might consist of two or more "waves."

memoranda circulated by G.H.Q., and the new methods of assault were practised by the brigades in the fields and downs of their billeting areas.

It was on the third day after the arrival of the two Anzac divisions in the back area that the great battle of July 14th

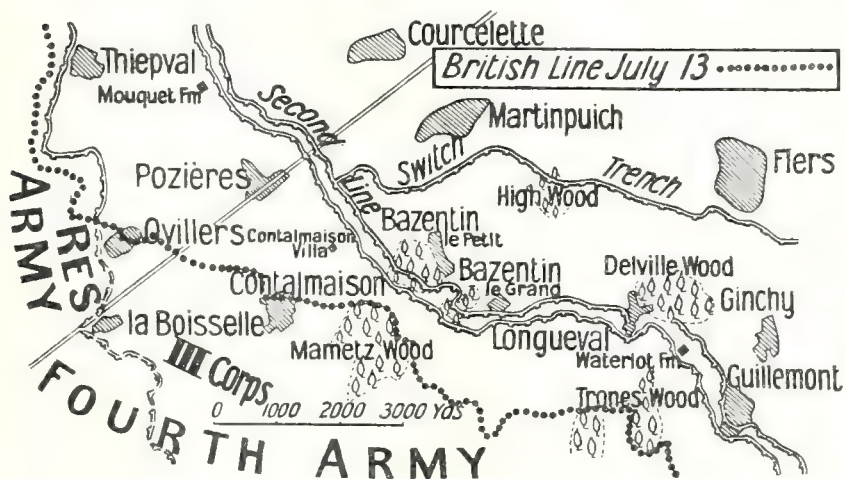


occurred, and, as during the day news arrived of the capture of a large sector of the German second line, interest ran high, there being a general expectation that the 1st Australian Division, which had now been moved to villages east of the Amiens-Doullens road—one stage nearer to the front—would with other troops be sent forward to extend the gap in the enemy's line, or push out towards open country. But the day wore on without the receipt of such orders. British officers of the corps staff who, during these days, visited G.H.Q. received the impression that the I Anzac Corps was considered a valuable reinforcement, and that either the Fourth or the Reserve Army would be glad to obtain it. The outstanding difficulty at the moment seemed to be the restriction of the battle-front by the stubborn German defence of a village on the Albert-Bapaume road. This was Pozières, which was then holding up the flank of the Fourth Army. On July 11th, before this place had yet been attacked, General Rawlinson, in conference with the Commander-in-Chief, had



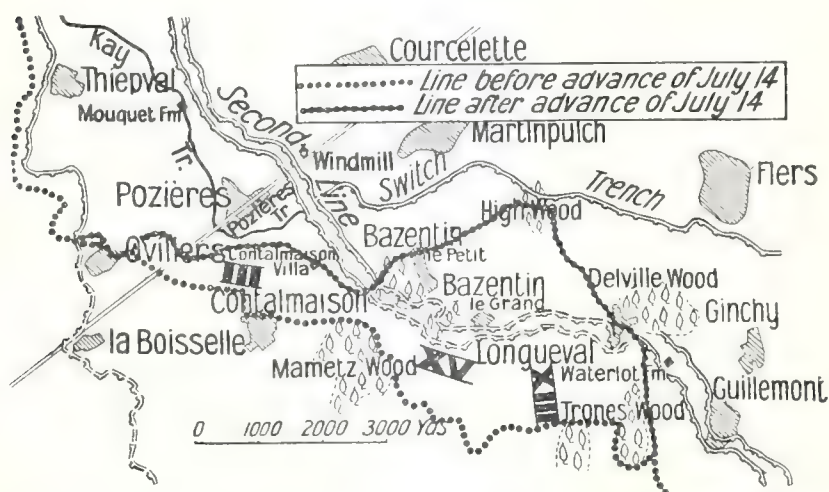
emphasised his opinion that "Pozières was the key of the area." The heavy batteries of the Reserve Army on that flank—and among them the two Australian—were very largely engaged in shelling it, and, from the time of the arrival of I Anzac, it had been rumoured that Rawlinson hoped to employ the Corps in its capture. The chief medical officer of I Anzac, Colonel Manifold, was already in communication with Rawlinson's director of medical services concerning the system and routes by which the wounded would be evacuated, and the 1st Division had on July 16th begun to march east, followed stage by stage by the 2nd, when on the 17th an order arrived allotting the corps not to the Fourth, but to the Reserve Army under General Gough.

The explanation lay in a change of the Commander-in-Chief's plan. When on July 14th the Fourth Army had attacked the southern portion of what, for want of a better name, may be called the "Second-line" Ridge, the III Corps



on the extreme left flank of the advance was charged with securing, not the second line or the summit, but certain positions in front of them, "pressing forward" from Contalmaison to Contalmaison Villa (three-quarters of a mile to the north-east) and in the direction of Pozières (a mile to the north). North of the Albert-Bapaume road the Reserve Army, which was already a mile beyond the old German

front, was merely to keep touch with the left of the Fourth. But here, on its extreme left, the grand attack had failed. Although farther to the south-east, on a three-mile front between Bazentin-le-Petit and Longueval, the XV and XIII Corps had seized the second line—a strong double trench running almost continuously along this ridge from the Ancre to the Somme—and the 7th and other divisions had gone far beyond it, here, farther west on the same ridge, both that line and Pozières village close in front of it remained in the



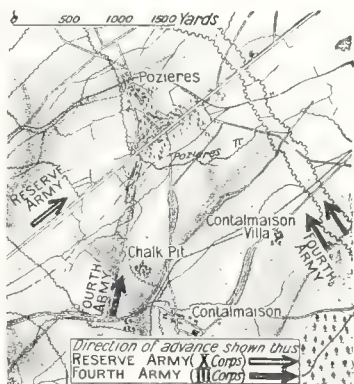
enemy's hands. Pozières was a minor agricultural hamlet appearing as a line of trees on the wide, open, slightly-swelling surface of the hill-top.<sup>9</sup> Its small houses, with orchards and hedges at their back, fringed for three-quarters of a mile the main Amiens-Bapaume road<sup>10</sup> where it approached the summit of the ridge. The two trenches of the second line lay a quarter of a mile beyond, and behind them the Pozières windmill, then a mere heap of stone,<sup>11</sup> on the actual summit—a point not perceptibly higher than other parts of the ridge, but actually one of the highest on the battlefield, and known to the Germans as "Hill 160." The village had been incorporated in the German second-line system by the hurried

<sup>9</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 209.

<sup>10</sup> See plate No. 39 and Vol. XII, plates 219-220.

<sup>11</sup> See plate No. 51.

digging of a single trench (known to the British as "Pozières Trench") around its southern outskirts. This connected at the south-west corner of the hamlet with part of the "intermediate" defence line, a strong "switch" between the first and second systems (known to the British as "K," or "Kay," Trench)<sup>12</sup> leading past the western outskirts of Pozières northward to Mouquet Farm (a large homestead formerly belonging to the proprietor of several of the neighbouring farms), Thiepval, and the "Schwaben Redoubt." Pozières thus formed a bastion of the second line, its strength arising from the fact that it lay on an open projecting plateau of the ridge, and consequently, both from the village and from the second line in rear, there existed a clear gently-graded field of fire for many hundred yards in all directions. Kay Trench, on its western outskirts, looked straight down Mash Valley, rendering the movement of the X Corps from the west very difficult. But the III Corps had been feeling towards the place with patrols from the south ever since the capture of Contalmaison on July 10th; on the 12th the 1st British Division had established a post in Contalmaison Wood, and on the 13th patrols of the 34th Division visited the "Chalk Pit," two-thirds of a mile from the south-western end of Pozières. The advance over the gently-folded approaches was



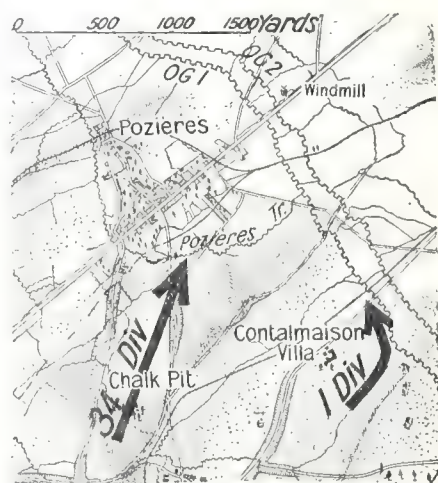
hampered by uncertainty as to where the enemy's troops would be found, since there existed many trenches from which a small German outpost could maintain a fairly strong resistance. As the Reserve Army, which was approaching it from the west, had for the moment by Haig's orders been forced to confine itself practically to bombing and patrol attacks, the British thrust towards Pozières was made chiefly by the Fourth Army, that is, from the south-west and south.

<sup>12</sup> It was sometimes also called "Western Trench."

Advancing thus during the great general effort of July 14th, a patrol of the left (34th) division of the III Corps reported that it had penetrated actually to Pozières Trench close outside the southern outskirts of the village, and had found it unoccupied. About the same time the centre (1st) division reached and occupied Contalmaison Villa. In consequence of the great success achieved farther to the right, the XV Corps decided, if possible, to penetrate over the crest to Martinpuich, and asked that the III Corps should at the same time widen the breach in the German second line. The 1st Division was accordingly ordered to bomb and force its way up the German second line and its tributary communication trenches, the 34th assaulting Pozières Trench over the open from the south and, if possible, entering the village. This plan of double attack was generally adopted in future operations against Pozières, since, unless the advance was simultaneously pushed up the German second line, the troops attacking Pozières Trench were liable to be terribly enfiladed from those formidable defences, which were known to the divisions attacking along them as the "Old German" (or "O.G.") Lines, the front trench being called "O.G.1," and the support "O.G.2."

Since the XV Corps postponed its assault, the attack by the 1st Division on the O.G. Lines was also deferred; but, in consequence of reports that enemy troops had

been observed streaming from Pozières, the operation against that place was undertaken by strong patrols. It was to be preceded by a bombardment of Pozières village; but, as three different artillery staffs<sup>13</sup> were issuing orders for it, much difficulty was found in ensuring that the barrage should fall

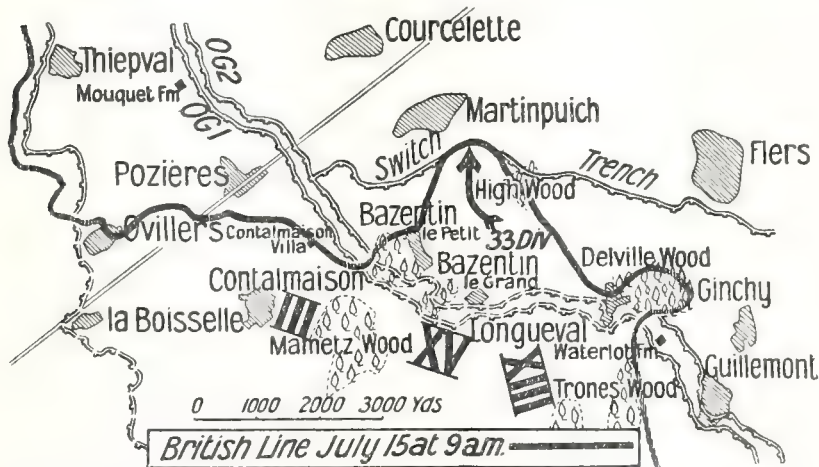


<sup>13</sup> Those of the III Corps, X Corps, and 34th Division. (See *The Thirty-fourth Division, 1915-1919*, by Lieutenant-Colonel J. Shakespear, p. 60.)



clear of the attacking troops. Eventually it was arranged that at 6 p.m. all shell-fire should be lifted north of the main road, in order to leave clear the southern half of the village. Upon the attack being made, three platoons of the 111th and 112th Brigades<sup>14</sup> succeeded in reaching Pozières Trench, but after dark were driven out. Two companies of the 8th East Lancashire were ordered to retake it, and were afterwards understood, though wrongly, to have done so.<sup>15</sup>

The great general success of the operation of July 14th seemed for the moment to portend that the decisive crisis of the whole offensive might be at hand. The effort to extend to the utmost the important gains was naturally continued on the following day. The objectives were: eastwards—for the XIII Corps on the extreme right—the ruined villages of Ginchy and Guillemont, Waterlot Farm, and Delville Wood; northwards—for the XV and III Corps—the Switch Trench, the O.G. Lines, and Pozières, with Martinpuich, in the valley beyond the crest, as a more distant goal. The attempt met with varying success: eastwards, the XIII Corps was stopped by the German barrage, except at Longueval, where the 9th (Scottish) Division,<sup>16</sup>



<sup>14</sup> These were two brigades temporarily lent to the 34th by the 37th Division. The Tyneside brigades, which had preceded the Australians at Armentières, were not engaged on the Somme during the tour of the I Anzac Corps.

<sup>15</sup> The German official account (*Somme Nord, Part II, p. 49*) says that a patrol of 40 of the 8th South (sic) Lancs. tried to get into Pozières in the sector held by the II/27th I.R., but was driven out, losing about 30 men.

<sup>16</sup> Including the South African Infantry Brigade. The 18th Division also was engaged in Delville Wood.

which on the previous day had taken that village, seized most of Delville Wood. Northwards the hold of the XV Corps on "High Wood" was maintained, but the Germans could not be cleared out from the northern extremity of the wood, and their fire held up the attack of the 33rd Division on the Switch Trench immediately west of the wood. The 33rd captured 1,000 yards of that trench three-quarters of a mile to the west. But farther left, in the area of the III Corps, the attack of the 34th and the 1st British Divisions in the neighbourhood of Pozières, though twice delivered—at 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.—again failed. The 34th Division on this occasion attacked after an hour's bombardment, the task of the 112th Brigade being to take the first trench and the village, after which the 111th was to pass through and seize the O.G. Lines about the windmill. The plan of assault partly depended upon the mistaken assumption that the 8th East Lancashires had a platoon in Pozières Trench. The main force started from a point no less than 1,300 yards south of the village, about half of its long approach, however, being hidden from the enemy. An hour after the launching of the assault it was reported that the troops were fighting through Pozières; but early in the afternoon it became apparent that this report also was mistaken, the 112th Brigade having been stopped by machine-guns. Upon its falling back, the 10th Royal Fusiliers, who were following, pushed through, and one company succeeded in reaching a detached orchard at the extreme south-western end of the village, the rest digging in 400 yards from the outskirts, where the curve of the hill just hid them from Pozières Trench. Major-General Ingouville-Williams,<sup>17</sup> commanding the division, himself visited the Chalk Pit, a few yards in rear of this line, and decided that the place should be again bombarded for an hour, from 5 to 6 p.m., and then attacked by the 10th Royal Fusiliers from the south-west. Accordingly at 5 o'clock the bombardment was commenced by the divisional

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<sup>17</sup> Gen. Williams was killed a week later by a shell near Mametz. (Maj.-Gen. E. C. Ingouville-Williams, C.B., D.S.O. Commanded 34th Div., 1915/16. Officer of British Regular Army; of Brook Lodge, Fermoy, Ireland; b. 13 Dec., 1861.)



33. THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD SEEN IN JULY 1916 FROM A BRITISH KITE-BALLOON

The view is from near Bécourt, looking north-east to Bapaume. The old British forward trenches occupy the foreground. The blurred streak beyond is the German front line, battered by the British bombardment. The woods on the right are those of Fricourt, Mametz, and Bazentin. Fricourt is on the near side of the lowest wood, on the extreme right. Bapaume is barely visible, lying near the horizon in the centre; but the Roman road leading to it can be seen towards the top of the left half of the picture.





34. A BATTALION OF THE 2ND DIVISION ON THE MARCH, LATE SUMMER, 1916

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. EZ109.*

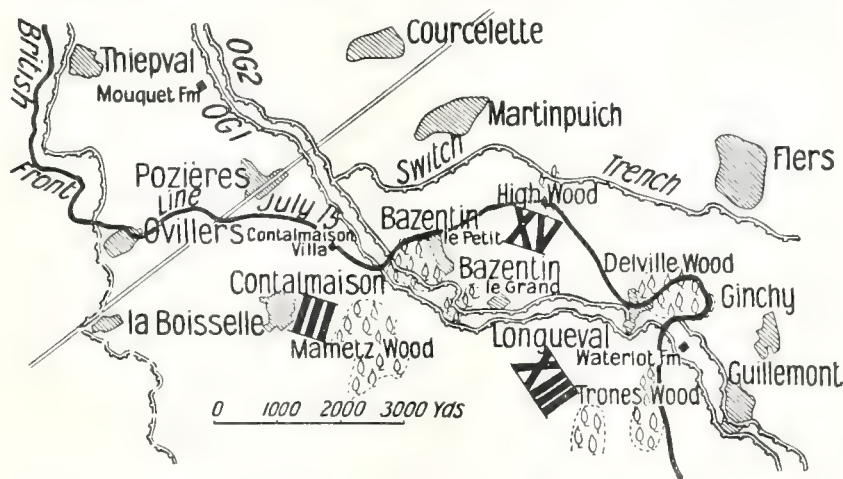
*To face p. 461.*



field-artillery, 100 heavy pieces<sup>18</sup> joining in at 5.30. A British artillery officer, who was watching, wrote:

This was the biggest bombardment of it (Pozières), by all our heavies, I have ever seen. The whole place went up in brick dust, and when it was over no trace of a building could be seen anywhere. It was a wonderful sight, huge clouds of rose-coloured, brown, bluish black, and white smoke rolling along together with flashes of bursts, the whole against a pale green-blue sky and bright evening sunlight.<sup>19</sup>

Yet the moment the shell-fire lifted, the Germans were seen (by a British airman who was flying above) to race for their machine-gun positions, and, reaching them before the unsuspecting British infantry had covered half the distance, they quickly stopped the advance.<sup>20</sup> The 1st British Division, whose task was to co-operate by advancing up the second German line and the communication trenches in rear, found the O.G. Lines so battered by shells as to be much exposed to machine-gun fire and was checked—in the morning, by



*Position on evening of July 15.*

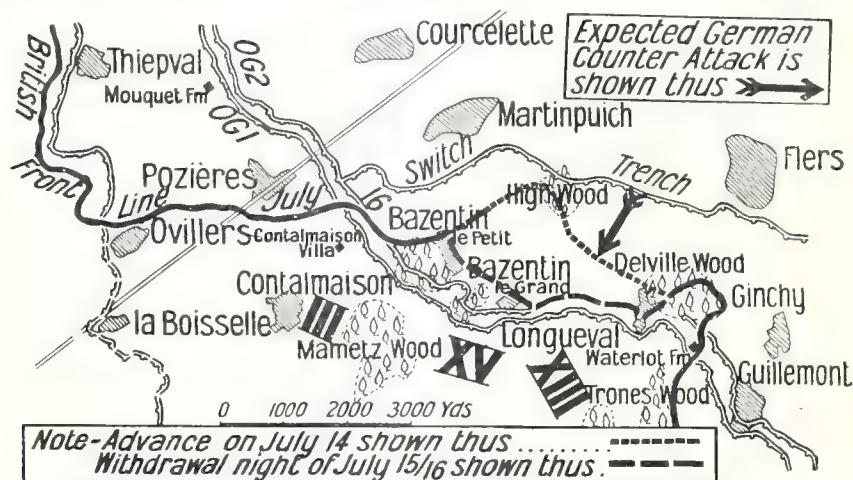
<sup>18</sup> Forty of the Reserve Army, as well as sixty of the Fourth.

<sup>19</sup> *The Thirty-Fourth Division, 1915-1919*, pp. 62-3. Major G. E. Manchester (of Sydney), in his history of the Australian Siege Brigade in the Great War, states: "During the bombardment of Pozières from 12th to 15th (July) inclusive, all natures of howitzers, including 12 inch and 15 inch, had been used, the general rate of fire being 8 to 25 rounds per hour per howitzer."

<sup>20</sup> The historian of the Royal Fusiliers states "At this point there was an unfortunate mischance. The rockets (*i.e.*, the signal to attack) failed, owing to dampness; and the battalion did not start in unison. Some advanced, others still waited, and the blow failed. Most determined and repeated attempts were made to rush the village, but nothing could live in such machine-gun fire." (*The Royal Fusiliers in the Great War*, by H. C. O'Neill, p. 119.) The 112th Brigade in this day's fighting lost 1,034 officers and men, and the 10th Royal Fusiliers 249—total 1,283.

the presence of Germans in Bazentin Wood,<sup>21</sup> which was supposed to have been long since cleared; in the evening, by machine-gun fire from German positions to the east of the O.G. Lines.

Thus the III Corps had made practically no advance. The XV Corps (33rd Division) had been unable to keep its hold upon the Switch line; and the sole important gain of July 15th was that of the XIII Corps (9th Division) in and around Delville Wood. Rawlinson now recognised that the reinforcements lately brought up by the Germans were amply sufficient to prevent his obtaining any more results from the offensive of July 14th, and therefore directed that isolated attacks exploiting that success should now cease. Both Haig and he, impressed by the strength of the enemy's reinforcements, suspected that the Germans were preparing a heavy counter-stroke against the flank of their advance at Longueval.<sup>22</sup> The advanced line in High Wood, being out of sight of other parts of the British front, and therefore dangerously exposed, was withdrawn on July 16th, and preparations were immediately begun for delivering, after strong

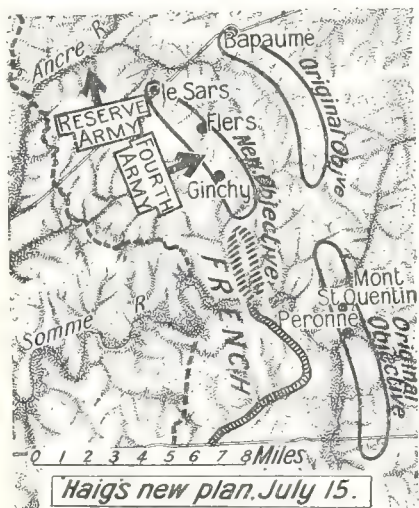


artillery preparation on a wide front, another powerful blow—the third in the Somme battle—somewhat similar to that of the 14th.

<sup>21</sup> The diary of the III Corps says "Mametz Wood," but it seems probable that this is a mistake.

<sup>22</sup> Rawlinson, indeed, expressed a hope that the enemy would deliver an early counter-attack.

The increasing German strength, however, made it obvious that this must be quickly dealt; and, even so, it may have appeared to Haig doubtful whether the original object—penetration to the Bapaume-Péronne heights, followed by an attack northwards up the enemy's line—was any longer attainable. Possibly for this reason he was now tempted to make the northward thrust at an earlier stage than had been formerly contemplated. Provided that the Fourth Army could reach the eastern end of the "Second-line" Ridge at Ginchy, and the neighbourhood of Flers and Le Sars at its north-eastern foot—all of which points were within a mile and a half of those reached in the last advance—the Reserve Army might be brought to the northern face of the salient so formed, and ordered to initiate the second phase of the original plan by attacking northward up the front of the Germans facing the Third Army. This modification was actually decided



upon, explained to the army commanders, and promulgated on July 15th. Steps were taken for carrying it out by reinforcing the Reserve Army with two army corps, comprising six fresh divisions; but within a few days it was given up—apparently on the realisation that to abandon the eastward advance meant a complete departure from the original scheme of co-operation with the French.<sup>23</sup> It was argued, possibly by Foch, that the French would soon be able to take a more important part in the battle, since the German

<sup>23</sup> Precisely what led up to the double change of plan is unknown, there being an obvious omission in the otherwise apparently frank and careful work of Mr. G. A. B. Dewar and Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Boraston—*Sir Douglas Haig's Command, 1915-1918*. They ignore the first change of plan, merely mentioning (p. 118, Vol. I) that it was one of two alternatives then possible. They add that "to have adopted" it "would have meant abandoning the idea of continuing the offensive as a joint operation in close association with the French. . . . These considerations decided the British Commander-in-Chief to turn away from the attractive scheme of a British attack northwards, and to devote his main efforts to gaining further ground to the east in co-operation with the French." Yet the



pressure on Verdun was relaxing and more French troops would be available for the Somme, and that the carrying out of the original plan of thrusting north of the river to Mont St. Quentin and Péronne was therefore not impossible.<sup>24</sup> Whatever the true reason for this change and counter-change, the eventual decision was<sup>25</sup> to continue the main thrust eastwards. One such offensive would in any case have been necessary in order to give the Reserve Army room to manœuvre. This offensive, at first planned to take place on the 17th, was deferred until the 18th in order to coincide with an advance to be made that day by Foch's army north and south of the Somme. "Everything," says the diary of the Fourth Army, "was working up to a big battle. How long it would last, was impossible to say."

In the plan for this third great attack the capture of Pozières formed a part, but, in the opinion of the Commander-in-Chief, only a secondary one. Haig believed in the military maxim that a mediocre plan consistently followed is better than a brilliant one frequently changed. Having on July 3rd decided to strike with his right, and proceed more slowly with his left,<sup>26</sup> he now—as would be expected by all who knew him—held firmly to that decision. It is true that he recognised that his hold on the main ridge was too narrow; "desirous though I was to follow up quickly the successes we had won, it was first necessary to widen this front."<sup>27</sup> But his chief anxiety was to widen it by extending

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former decision was undoubtedly arrived at, and steps initiated for carrying it out. The XIV Corps (6th, Guards, and 20th Divisions) from Ypres at once changed places with the VIII Corps (38th, 4th, and 29th Divisions). The II Corps (then without divisions) was to take over for the time being the divisions of the X Corps, and, according to one official diary, the II Corps and I Anzac Corps were to undertake the northward thrust. There appears to be some evidence that the abandonment of the change of plan occurred after further consultation with Foch. Incidentally it was during these days of apparent uncertainty that the later conferences concerning the projected attack at Fromelles were being held.

Curiously enough, a similar alteration of plan on the part of the French seems to have been suggested by General de Castelnau, who, immediately after the first French successes of July 1 and 2, urged that the French attack should be directed southwards from the salient formed. The plan was not adopted. (*French Headquarters*, by Jean de Pierrefeu, p. 76.)

<sup>24</sup> It was proposed to bring in another French corps north of the Somme.

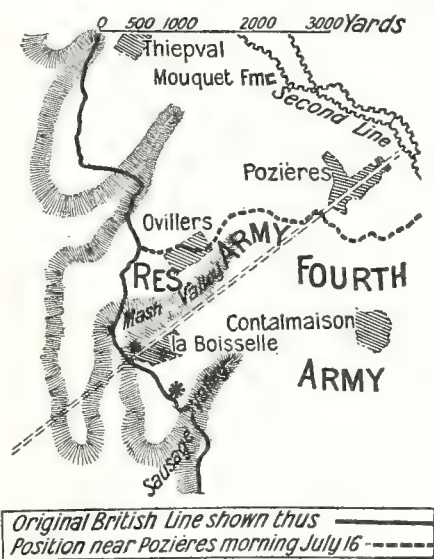
<sup>25</sup> In the absence of other authority, the account given by Dewar and Boraston is accepted as conclusive on this point.

<sup>26</sup> See pp. 316-317.

<sup>27</sup> *Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches*, p. 31.



the other flank, striking deeper towards Ginchy. "The villages of Pozières and Thiepval," he says, ". . . had still to be carried. An advance further east would, however, eventually turn these defences, and all that was for the present required on the left flank of our attack was a steady, methodical, step-by-step advance as already ordered." The piecemeal method, it may be observed, was not proving effective or inexpensive. Pozières had by July 16th already been three times assaulted without success, and still formed a buttress narrowing the front of the British offensive. Even Ovillers, in the old German front system three-quarters of a mile north of La Boisselle, was until July 16th still actually uncaptured, the Reserve Army having since July 7th<sup>28</sup> been practically restricted to bombing attacks upon it,<sup>29</sup> and a German garrison, part of which had been there since July 2nd, still holding out, though practically surrounded, in the northern part of the village. Stronger efforts were being made against Pozières, partly because it lay on the front of the Fourth Army, and partly because, by seizing its site at the head of Mash Valley, the British would automatically get rid of the main obstacle to their advance near Ovillers, lower down. The other advantages to be obtained by its capture were obvious: the British front



<sup>28</sup> Before that date the attack on Ovillers had been vigorously pressed over the open. On July 1 the 8th Division failed with heavy loss, due largely to the width of No-Man's Land. The 12th Division being then brought in seized part of Ovillers on July 7, and was withdrawn on July 8 after losing 4,765 officers and men. Ovillers was finally taken on the evening of July 16.

<sup>29</sup> To assist these attacks, the heavy artillery was employed in blowing-in trench-junctions not far ahead of the attacking troops. The Fourth Army "Intelligence Summary" on July 7 recorded that, in these delicate operations, the fire of the 55th (Australian) Siege Battery—in accordance with the directions of an aeroplane of the 13th Squadron, R.F.C.—was "exceedingly accurate." The bombing attacks on Ovillers were much hampered by the mud.

on the Second-line Ridge would be greatly widened, and the way opened for an even more important extension by an assault northwards along that ridge, with the object of rendering Thiepval also untenable by the enemy. Incidentally the driving of the enemy from Pozières and Ovillers would enable field-guns to be placed in Mash Valley,<sup>30</sup> which at present was closed to them; and, if the second line just beyond Pozières were also seized, much of the enemy's observation would be closed, and there would be obtained by the British a wide outlook over the German rear.

Unfortunately the weather now fell rainy, with "thin, low, driving black fog, as cold as October,"<sup>31</sup> and these conditions—the same which caused the two days' postponement at Fromelles—practically stopped all fighting; airmen were unable to photograph the new enemy works so that they could be mapped and bombarded. Consequently<sup>32</sup> the projected eastward thrust was again postponed until the 19th, the attack by the III Corps on Pozières, however, remaining fixed for the 18th. At midnight on the 16th, a comparatively quiet day on the rest of the front, the 3rd Brigade of the 1st British Division attacked from the front—that is, from the area north of Contalmaison—a sector of the O.G. Lines. These were found crowded with German dead, and were seized, without strong opposition, almost as far as the junction with Pozières Trench.<sup>33</sup> This advance might materially assist the force attacking the village; and Brigadier-General Page Croft,<sup>34</sup> whose brigade—the 68th—had been lent to the 34th Division for the main assault, asked that an additional advantage might be obtained by the seizure of Pozières Trench on the evening of the 17th, allowing the assault on the village next morning to be launched from that more favourable position. This request being approved, the 12th

<sup>30</sup> In order to fire on Thiepval and Courcellette.

<sup>31</sup> From an Australian diary of the time.

<sup>32</sup> On July 17.

<sup>33</sup> From a reference in the diary of the III Corps it might be inferred that this sector was not captured until midnight on the 17th. According to the other available diaries, however, the attack occurred at midnight on the 16th.

<sup>34</sup> Brig.-Gen. Sir Henry Page Croft, Bt., C.M.G. Commanded 68th Inf. Bde. 1916/17; of London; b. Ware, Herts., Eng., 22nd June, 1881. (The 68th Brigade belonged to the 23rd Division.)

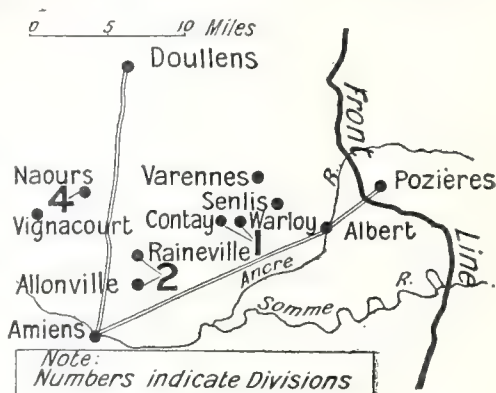
Durham Light Infantry at 8 p.m. on the 17th made the preliminary attack. The bombardment included the fire of heavy guns and trench-mortars, but, when it lifted, the advancing infantry, before it had gone more than seventy yards, was met with the fire of "at least ten machine-guns," coming not only from a concrete structure at the south-western end of the village and from the ruins in the main street, but also from the O.G. Lines. Some of the troops reached the barbed-wire in front of Pozières Trench, which was not entirely cut, and their dead remained hanging in it. "The enemy also," Page Croft reported, "had a very big barrage on the trenches of the attackers." The assault failed, rendering almost hopeless the outlook for the extensive operation next day. Page Croft represented this to the higher staff, recommending that Pozières Trench should be pounded systematically by "heavies," and its capture made a special operation. Nevertheless his three remaining battalions prepared for the assault.

On that day, however, Haig had decided to relieve the Fourth Army of the duty of attending to this flank,<sup>35</sup> by transferring to the Reserve Army the task of operating against Pozières. The projected assault by the III Corps, Fourth Army, was therefore abandoned. The 68th Brigade set to work to dig a complete trench facing the Pozières defences, and the troops allotted to the Reserve Army for the reduction of the place were hurried from the rear areas to take over part of the front of the III Corps, replacing the 34th Division and part of the 1st. The III, XV, and XIII Corps (Fourth Army) would at the same time shrink slightly eastwards. In consequence of the congestion of the roads in the French and British salient north of the Somme, this movement would take several days; and all large offensive operations on that front were necessarily postponed until it could be completed.

The force allotted to the Reserve Army for the seizure of Pozières was the 1st Australian Division, which was by then in the area around Contay and Warloy-Baillon, three stages east from Vignacourt and twelve miles from the

<sup>35</sup> The ostensible reason, and possibly the real one, was to leave the Fourth Army more men for the main offensive farther east.

battlefield, with most of the 2nd Australian Division following two stages behind it, and the 4th a stage behind that. The order given to General Gough was to "carry out methodical operations against Pozières with a view to capturing that important position with as little delay as possible"; and being both temperamentally and through consideration of the urgent needs of the situation im-



patient of any delay, he decided not to wait until the staff of the I Anzac Corps could come up and take control of the sector, but to carry out the operation with the 1st Australian Division acting directly under himself and the staff of the Reserve Army. His greeting to General Walker, when the latter was summoned to his headquarters, was: "I want you to go into the line and attack Pozières tomorrow night!" The first operation would be an assault on the trenches in front of the village; if it were successful, the village itself would be attacked in a second operation on the night following. Walker was given the choice of striking at Pozières from the south-west—the plan now preferred by the staff of the Reserve Army—or from the south-east. If he chose the former method, his division could be allowed more space for forming up, but the enemy would be close upon the left of both its assembly ground and its advance. If he preferred to attack from the south-east, his division must squeeze itself on to its assembly position from the west, since all routes to the south were already too congested by the traffic of the Fourth Army and the French.<sup>36</sup>

The Anzac veteran, receiving the impression that somewhat hasty or ill-considered action might be imposed upon him, argued desperately for a postponement. In any case there was obvious need for his division to be hurried into the line. It was ordered to move that day to the villages

<sup>36</sup> The accuracy of this account has been disputed, but is confirmed by the evidence of contemporary diaries.



of Senlis and Varennes, and on the 19th through Albert to the battlefield, taking over that night the new front line which Page Croft's brigade was busily digging south of Pozières. The division was hurriedly instructed as to the organisation necessary behind the battlefield for collecting prisoners of war in barbed-wire enclosures (afterwards known as "cages"), controlling traffic, and systematically collecting stragglers, of whom recent experience had shown that a considerable number might, after the action, be found in rear of the fighting area. The headquarters of the division was to proceed on July 19th to Albert, in the centre of which town the intact Château Lamont, with its fine gardens, lay ready for it. The reconnoitring of Pozières, and consideration by the generals and their staffs of the plan of attack, then began.

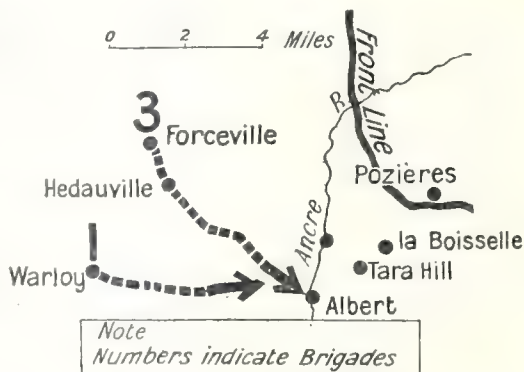
Walker, though well aware of the difficulties entailed by the narrowness of the approaches, nevertheless chose to attack Pozières from the south-east, thus avoiding (as he explained to a member of the Reserve Army staff whom he had taken forward for the purpose) the exposure of his left flank to German fire throughout the operation. Attacking from the south-east, his exposed flank would be the right; but it should be safe, since the neighbouring part of the O.G. Lines—from which alone, by the lie of the land, flanking fire could come—was to be captured in the same operation. The divisional staff had been informed that the frontage of a division in attack should be 1,000 yards; but the front allotted to Walker at Pozières was a mile, his objective being slightly narrower than that of the 5th Division at Fromelles. He decided to attack with two brigades, keeping the third in reserve. As was becoming the practice with commanders of the A.I.F., he entrusted the most difficult part of the operation to country troops, or at least those from the less settled of the Australian States, whom he considered the most hardened. Accordingly the 3rd Brigade (Queensland, South and Western Australia, and Tasmania) was ordered to the right of the line, where the two O.G. trenches, as well as part of Pozières Trench, must be subdued. The 1st Brigade (New South Wales) was to attack Pozières Trench upon the left. The 2nd (Victoria)<sup>37</sup> was to be retained in reserve. In

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<sup>37</sup> This brigade possibly contained a slightly higher percentage of city men than the 1st, and fewer from "outback."

pursuance of these orders, on the afternoon of July 19th the 3rd moved off from its country billets at Hedauville and Forceville, closely followed by the 1st from Warloy.

The Australian brigades which thus marched through the last of the green country towards the open waste of their first great battlefield in France were, on the whole, well rested and in high spirits. To the average British soldier, as well as to people at home, the reports of the



Somme battle appeared almost wholly favourable. It is true that the great results announced on July 1st and 14th had in each case been followed only by more heavy fighting. But the public, and even the army—except the divisions which had taken part on July 1st—had little conception of the cost, or of how far the results fell short of the intentions. Two great blows had undoubtedly been struck; the British were for the first time making headway through a firmly-established enemy position; the lines which most of the troops had believed impregnable were being slowly penetrated. This was a valuable achievement, but, to the army and people who had yearned so long for success, the intermittent advances on the Somme often signified far more than they were worth; and, as the *communiqués* of G.H.Q.—prepared for enemy consumption—were rose-coloured, and unfavourable comment was suppressed by the then censors, the average citizen or soldier entertained few misgivings. The optimism of the Australian troops would have thriven on far less encouragement.

We are on the way (wrote one of them<sup>38</sup>) to the Somme valley, where a big push has been going on successfully since the 1st of July. . . . The firing line is continually moving up as we attack an objective each day. Only at one point is the advance held up, Thiepval. . . . Many English regiments pass us who have been relieved from the front area. . . . They have been very successful and are all singing as they march along, every man wearing a German helmet. . . .

<sup>38</sup> Sgt. A. L. de Vine (of Maroubra, N.S.W.), 4th Bn.

The great majority of the troops, even in the 1st Division, were comparatively new, having joined the battalions during the reorganisation in Egypt and never yet experienced a great offensive, three months' trench-service at Armentières notwithstanding. During "spells" in billets, however, a fair amount of battalion drill had been possible, even in spite of the increased fatigues consequent on the remodelling of the trench-lines. The grounding which many had previously lacked had thus been to a large extent supplied; and the battalions which had been reviewed by the Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, and the High Commissioner, Andrew Fisher, near Fleurbaix in June,<sup>39</sup> though not perfectly trained, were probably as nearly so as most of the British divisions employed in the battle. On this, their first entry upon the great battlefield of which they had heard so much, they again experienced some of the feelings of new boys joining a great school; but they had absorbed, as thoroughly as was possible in the time, the lessons of the Somme and the new forms of attack and defence evolved by their predecessors in the battle and passed on to them by army staffs. In physique and morale they were not surpassed. It is true that in their first long march through Picardy, their feet being then soft with months of trench work, several of the brigades had distressed their commanders by a woeful exhibition of march-discipline. In one brigade so numerous had been the stragglers that General Cox ordered the battalion commanders to ride in rear of their units until further orders. The effects of undue carousal in the new billeting area had also

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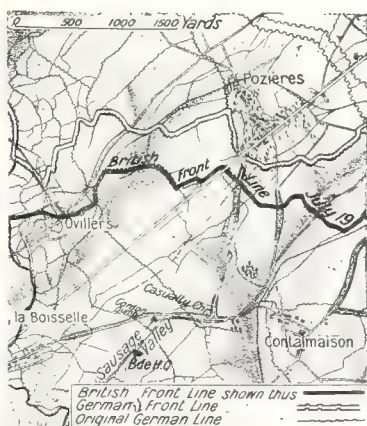
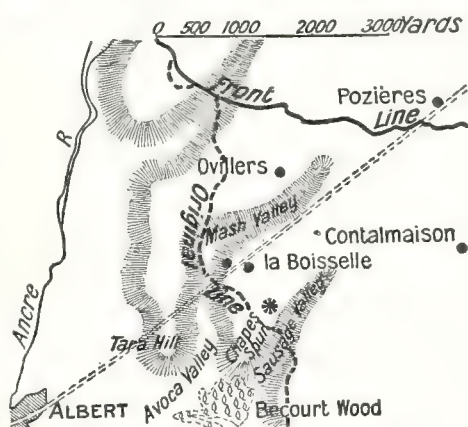
<sup>39</sup> See plate 23 and Vol. XII, plate 176. W. M. Hughes addressed the battalions of the 1st Brigade in an orchard, himself standing on a waggon. The tenor of his speech was that the thoughts of the Australian people were all with their men at the front, and that, whatever happened, those at home would not forget them or their dependants, either during the war or after. Hughes, however, had not yet the popularity with the Australian soldier which he attained at the close of the war, and the effect of his fine address was, as so often happens, largely spoiled for the troops by the fact that they were kept waiting for several hours before he appeared. On the occasion in question he observed in the ranks of the 2nd Battalion W. J. Johnson (of Auburn, N.S.W.), formerly a Labour member of the Federal Parliament, who, in spite of his somewhat advanced age, was serving as a private in the infantry. When Hughes, who had recently been receiving courtesies from civic and other authorities all over the British Isles, shook hands with his old friend, the latter asked with a smile: "Well, Billy, have they made you a Doctor of Divinity yet?" Johnson, who bore cheerfully and without complaint duties for which he was really too old, was mortally wounded about noon on July 23 at Pozieres, being hit in the head by a fragment of shell, in the trench held by his company.

for the first day or two been visible. But after these *contretemps*, inseparable from military life, the brigades had marched exceedingly well; and many, who saw their columns swinging along cheerfully between the sunlit hedges to snatches of old marching-songs or whistled tunes, turned to watch them out of sight and wonder what were the conditions in that far southern continent to produce generally such fine specimens of men. At the last stage before Albert the steel helmets (or "tin-hats"), till then carried on the pack, had been donned, the brigades leaving behind their felt hats and caps, together with packs and blankets—all of which were stored under guard of a few men in certain village barns; the troops still carried their water-proof sheets and overcoats, rolled and slung bandolier-fashion, and also their haversacks, in which were stowed, besides rations, their razors and other such necessities. As a distinguishing mark for the 1st Australian Division, squares of pink cloth had at this stage been sewn on the tunics between the shoulder-blades. Leather gaiters and "Sam Browne" belts were, by order, discarded by officers, who, save for the stars or other insignia on their shoulder straps, must go into battle dressed precisely like their men.

Such were the brigades which passed through villages crowded with British troops fresh from the battle; dipped down to the red-roofed city of Albert, low in the valley of the Ancre; were directed by traffic-control men through its congested and battered, but not yet ruined, streets, over the narrow brick bridge (little more than a culvert); wound to the right beneath the shadow of the great red-brick church of Notre-Dame-de-Brebières, from the broken tower of which the gilded statue of the Virgin and Child hung at right angles, as if diving into the street far below; and presently rested for their tea beside the Bapaume road, at the foot of a long, bare, grassy slope, "Tara Hill"—the last green country intervening between them and the battlefield. Guides from the 2nd and 68th British Brigades, holding the line opposite Pozières, were here to meet and lead them over the sidelong tracks to which the troops south of Pozières were necessarily



restricted; and at 6 o'clock the 9th Battalion (Queensland) led off round the slope of Tara Hill, down into "Avoca Valley" (a lower bend of Mash Valley), over the next hill ("Chapes Spur"), on the lower end of which lay the dense green cluster of Bécourt Wood, and down again into the long shallow dip of Sausage Valley,<sup>40</sup> invariably known to the Australians as Sausage "Gully," which for the next six weeks was to be the main avenue of approach to the Australian fighting area, its constant traffic and busy life recalling to some of the troops their memories of the beach at Anzac. The route here used by transport was not a regular road, but a bare track worn by thousands of wheels, passing round the edge of Bécourt Wood and then skirting the western side of Sausage Gully not far from the great chalk mine-crater south of La Boisselle;<sup>41</sup> thence, for a mile, along the bottom of the valley,<sup>42</sup> winding between a sea of old shell-holes, past line after line of old German trenches—the scene of famous, but entirely-forgotten, fighting of a fortnight before. Troops passing through this area by day were immediately struck by the fact that it was flayed of most of its former covering of grass, the white chalk-earth or red-brown soil showing bare and crossed in every direction by hundreds of dusty tracks; the outlines of the trenches and



<sup>40</sup> See Vol. XII, plates 209, 211.

<sup>41</sup> This was a still larger crater than the one, observed by many visitors to the Somme area, beside the Bapaume road.

<sup>42</sup> Here it coincided with the line of a pre-war track.

of the old shell-holes were worn down by recent bombardments and by the feet of thousands of men. In wet weather every track and shell-hole grew slimy with white or red mud. Both slopes of the gully were allotted to the reserve battalions, whose troops bivouacked in old trenches or in craters. Near the crests were numerous field-batteries in their firing positions, while across the main track lower down the valley were ranged four old 4.7-inch guns, whose blast constantly shocked troops or transport marching up or down the valley,<sup>43</sup> and was stated to have blown more than one unsuspecting rider off his horse. Lower down still were the emplacements of heavier guns, mostly covered with a loose canopy of netting, in which tufts of dyed raffia had been tied to screen the monster below from the observation of enemy airmen.<sup>44</sup> A trench tramway from the outskirts of Albert had now reached a point near the head of the valley, and a supply-dépôt had been formed there known as "Gordon Dump," its name being the only relic of "Gordon Post," the scene of famous fighting by the 34th Division on July 1st. On the opposite bank, among the tumbled remains of German trenches, was the entrance to a deep and especially well-furnished enemy dugout, now used as headquarters of a British brigade.

Sausage Valley ended at a cross-road which came from La Boisselle and was allotted as an alternative route for the Australian troops and their transport.<sup>45</sup> Its farther (or northern) side was protected by one of those low natural banks or "lynchets," which are common in the chalk country of England or France, formed not by intention, but by the result of hundreds of years of ploughing, which has gradually altered the surface level of the fields, sometimes causing stretches of road to be sunken, or the sloping country to be terraced with steep scrubby banks separating several expanses of ploughland.<sup>46</sup> This particular bank was just sufficient

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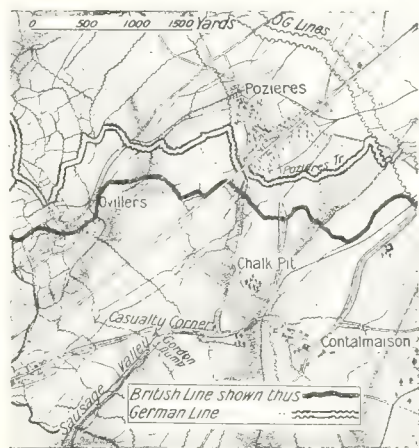
<sup>43</sup> See plate No. 37.

<sup>44</sup> Open-work camouflage was used, so that the outlines should be concealed and there should at the same time be no harsh dark shadow which would betray the position in an air-photograph.

<sup>45</sup> It was by this road from La Boisselle that most of the 1st Brigade approached the front.

<sup>46</sup> See *The Old Front Line*, by John Masefield, pp. 34-5.

to give partial protection to men behind it; a wayfarer coming across the battlefield by day saw, over it, the hilltop reaching bare and almost level for a mile, to where a line of ragged copse straggled across a wide sector of the horizon—the back gardens and orchards of Pozzières.<sup>47</sup> From that road-bank forward any troops who moved by day across the open would be in full view both of Germans in front of the village and of those beyond it in the O.G. Lines, whose parapet could just be seen east of it rimming the sky-line. The new British trenches in front of Pozzières could barely be distinguished by anyone standing at the head of Sausage Gully, but the left of them could be reached

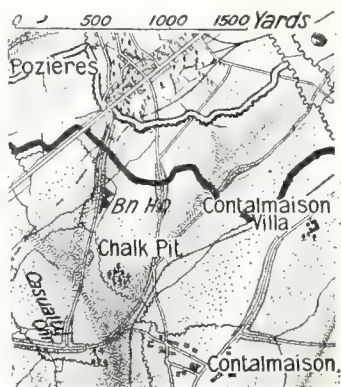


from that point by a tortuous communication trench—partly old German reserve-line, and partly new trench dug by the 34th Division. Usually, however, troops making their way to the front turned sharply to the right along the road, which almost at once became enclosed between steep banks. Moving between these over the spur forming the right of Sausage Gully, and thence down towards the next dip, which the road crossed on an embankment or causeway, they would at once behold on the far side of that valley, only a few hundred yards ahead, the ruins of Contalmaison. Men making towards the south-western end of Pozzières did not proceed across Contalmaison valley, but turned sharply to the left at a steep cut in the road-bank—the site of a medical aid-post, and afterwards known—both for that reason and from the danger of the position—as “Casualty Corner”<sup>48</sup>—and headed along an open white cross-road straight for that end of the village. This road led through a wide shallow depression (really the

<sup>47</sup> The lower sketch in Vol. XII (plate 210) was made, and the photograph (plate 216) taken, from this point.

<sup>48</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 212.

head of Contalmaison valley) out of view of the enemy. In the gentle slope on its right, half-a-mile forward, there opened out the white quarry known as the "Chalk Pit,"<sup>49</sup> in which had been established a small forward dump of grenades, and another medical aid-post. A quarter of a mile beyond this, in a low bank some distance to the right of the road, had been cut a narrow chalky niche, serving as battle-headquarters for a battalion. Two hundred yards north of this point the road became slightly sunken and ran on between low banks into the trees of Pozieres. In this sunken track (sometimes known later as "Dead Man's Road")



the troops repulsed in former attacks had tended to congregate. The new British lines before Pozieres, with their one or two short avenues of communication—narrow irregular trenches cut through the turf and the brown top-soil—ran out into its banks. The hedges and back gardens of the village, in German hands, were 300 to 400 yards distant,<sup>50</sup> and 150 yards nearer lay the red parapet and wire of Pozieres Trench. At the western end the Bapaume road formed the left boundary of the front line to be taken over by the Australians, the front from there westward to Ovillers being occupied by the 48th Division. That division, covered by its own and some heavy artillery, was during the coming operation to attack the German position north



<sup>49</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 207.

<sup>50</sup> Except for an outlying orchard on the Bapaume road at the western end of the village.



of its own, and thence bomb forward along a series of communication trenches leading to the north-western end of the village.

Such was the area through which by night the 3rd and 1st Australian Brigades were guided to relieve the 2nd and 68th British Brigades respectively. As they moved, platoon by platoon, over the strange open approaches—their faces and figures occasionally illuminated to a bold crude ochre against the dark by the orange flashes of the guns on their right, or pale grey in the light of the flares gently drooping<sup>51</sup> over the dark moorland to their left—the troops frequently caught the whine of small German shell approaching, but plunging with a gentle “pat” into the earth. These were at first judged to be “blind” (or, in the soldiers’ slang, “duds”) and little notice was taken of them. It was presently suspected, however, that their explosion might be connected with a slight aromatic smell which pervaded some parts of the track. They were, in fact, a new form of gas-shell containing phosgene, insidious and highly dangerous if bursting close to a man who was not wearing a mask.<sup>52</sup> The III Corps had reported such shell falling on July 14th in and around Bécourt Wood, and a warning had been issued; but, before the incoming Australian brigades recognised their nature, Lieutenants White<sup>53</sup> and Graham<sup>54</sup> of the 1st Battalion, and several men, were gassed.<sup>55</sup> In other parts of the route, especially near Pozzières, there was observed a sweet odour not unlike that of hyacinth. On later days when parts of the area were deluged with this scent it was discovered to be caused by “tear-shell,” painful to the eyes and blinding them with tears, but not otherwise harmful.

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<sup>51</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 203.

<sup>52</sup> Phosgene produced on the heart a delayed effect, not infrequently fatal twenty-four hours after the actual gassing.

<sup>53</sup> Capt. B. G. White, 1st Bn. Farmer; of Upper Brisbane Valley district, Q’land; b. San Fernando, Trinidad, 2 April, 1884.

<sup>54</sup> Lieut. F. A. Graham, 1st Bn. Of Ingleburn, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 20 Feb., 1893.

<sup>55</sup> Lieut. F. E. Everitt (prior to enlistment, a student at Moore Theological College, Newtown, N.S.W.), of the same battalion also, was mortally wounded during this relief.

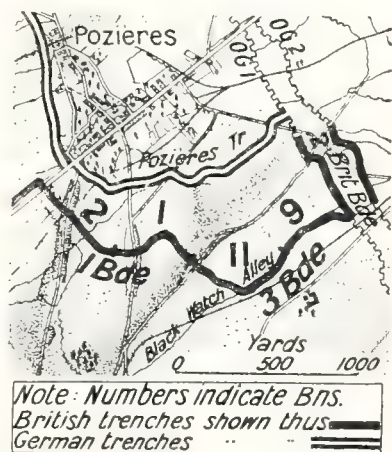
In spite of these experiences the relief was without much difficulty carried out by the 1st Brigade,<sup>56</sup> the 2nd Battalion shortly after midnight taking over the front trench opposite the south-west end of Pozières, with the 1st Battalion south of the village on its right, and the 3rd and 4th back at Sausage Valley in the reserve area. The 3rd Brigade, taking over the line south-east of the village, had to move across Contalmaison valley, and, when approaching the north-western corner of that village, turned north-eastwards into the only completed trench then existing in that area west of the O.G. Lines—a communication trench originally dug by the Germans along the spur south of that on which Pozières lay, and named (after the unit of the 1st British Division which had recently seized it) “Black Watch Alley.”<sup>57</sup> This was 600 yards south of the German front line, but still constituted the main British defence in this sector, since the more advanced line which was being dug on the far side of the intervening valley,<sup>58</sup> 200 yards from the Germans, was in part incomplete. Black Watch Alley led to the O.G. Lines, which were held by the 1st British Division up to a point 500 yards north-west of that junction. The Australians were to take over for the battle the British posts in both O.G. 1 and 2, but the 1st British Division would normally continue to hold O.G.2, and also O.G.1 as far as Black Watch Alley. That division, however, had just ascertained that its posts were not so far forward as was previously believed, and had asked for this part of the relief to be postponed for another night to permit of their being advanced. Accordingly only Black Watch

<sup>56</sup> Writing in 1917 Brigadier-General Page Croft, in *Twenty-two Months under Fire* (p. 225), states “This day was most unpleasant, as the front system and the Sausage Valley were shelled all day long; and from 5 p.m. the enemy poured gas shells into the Sausage Valley, so that all the gas drifted down to the lowest ground where my dugout was situated, and by which a whole Australian brigade had to come. In brigade headquarters our eyes were streaming for at least seven hours, and the gas was more unpleasant than the usual tear shells, with the result that we had to keep our helmets on the whole time, and the relieving brigade of the 1st Australian Division had the very unpleasant and difficult task of marching up on relief in the dark, in their gas helmets. The relief, notwithstanding, was admirably carried out, and rarely have we known greater efficiency in any relief than that by the Anzacs on this occasion.”

<sup>57</sup> The system, largely adopted by the old regular divisions, of naming positions after the units which captured them, left the trench-maps of this and other battlefields covered with names recording the magnificent fighting which had occurred there—for example, at Ypres, “Black Watch Corner,” “Cameron Coverts,” “Northampton Farm.”

<sup>58</sup> The eastern branch of the head of Contalmaison Valley. This branch was sometimes known (from a sunken road which ran through it) as “Sunken Road Valley.” In the western branch lay the Chalk Pit and Dead Man’s Road.

Alley and the unfinished "jumping-off" trenches in front of it were taken over that night. The companies of the 9th and 11th Battalion carrying out this relief were subjected to a desultory barrage of gas-shell. Some of the relieving platoons, having to wear their gas-masks, through which it was difficult to see, could proceed only at funeral pace, halting, shifting, and halting again in the congested sap, lighted by the enemy flares which rose and fell close ahead of them. Before dawn on July 20th the whole front from which Pozières was to be attacked, except the head of O.G.I, had been occupied by the 1st Australian Division—1st Brigade on left, and 3rd on right. The pioneers were surveying the exact relative positions of the British and German lines near Black Watch Alley, concerning which General Walker was not satisfied. The artillery had during the same night taken over, in their positions near Sausage Valley and "Bailiff Wood," the guns of the 19th Division, which had been supporting the 34th. The artillery of the 34th Division would still support the right of the 1st Australian Division, and the 1st British Division to the east.



From the moment of their entry upon this battlefield, the Australian infantry found the conditions widely different from any within their previous experience. The whole front area was dangerous through intermittent shell-fire, and casualties at once began to occur much more frequently than at Armentières. Certain routes near the line were liable to be heavily shelled at any moment, and troops using them were never quite free from tension. Gusts of furious bombardment occasionally buried the north-western corner of Contalmaison in clouds of black and grey smoke and of brickdust, barring for a time all passage of the roadway. This, it was realised, was a foretaste of the much-heard-of

German "barrage," which was likely to be experienced in far greater intensity as soon as the principal battle again flared up. The cross-road at the head of Sausage Valley, and the open road leading thence past the Chalk Pit to Pozières, were frequently shelled either with 5.9-inch projectiles, which tore craters ten feet wide in the road-banks or the neighbouring fields, or with ugly bursts of "black shrapnel"—high-explosive shells timed to explode in the air with black smoke and a harsh dry crash and project their small fragments not forwards, like true shrapnel, but in all directions. The Chalk Pit road especially was recognised as an ugly dangerous avenue, along which a man would walk with as much speed as he decently could. Some tension existed even back in Albert, where, on the night of July 20th, the Château Lamont and the streets around were shelled by heavy howitzers, causing the divisional headquarters to move next day to No. 12, Rue Pont Noyelles.

The British trenches in front of Pozières, which were true trenches—resembling excavations for gas- or water-pipes—and not breastworks as at Armentières, lacked dugouts or shelters other than the shallow "puzzies" in their sides. Describing the position taken over by his company, Captain Harris<sup>59</sup> of the 3rd Battalion afterwards wrote:

We found the trench to be deep and strong and well traversed, but there was no shelter of any kind there except holes scraped in the forward face just deep enough to allow a man to sit up and rest in a rather cramped position. At company headquarters, which was a slightly deeper scrape than usual, rather like a niche in a cathedral for the accommodation of a saint's statue,<sup>60</sup> I found the company commander, an Oxford don, and formally took over the trench and trench-stores. The latter consisted of a few picks and shovels and about an eighth of a jar of rum.

The trenches were at present not heavily shelled, but evidences of recent fighting lay around. On the flank of the trench above described lay a section of sap "literally choked with dead bodies, British and German." In the sector of the other brigade the one main trench, Black Watch Alley, was in parts a filthy channel, half-filled with liquid yellow mud and

<sup>59</sup> Maj. J. R. O. Harris, 3rd Bn. Schoolmaster; of North Sydney; b. Windsor, Berkshire, Eng., 4 Dec., 1877.

<sup>60</sup> See plate No. 36 (the troops are British), and Vol. XII, plate No. 198.



obstructed by corpses which there had been as yet no time to remove. The energies of pioneers, engineers, and working parties of infantry had been concentrated on the nightly digging, nearer the enemy, of new "jumping-off" trenches for the attack, a work upon which G.H.Q., in a circular recently issued to all its armies, insisted as indispensable for success. Two pioneer officers, Lieutenants Jenkins<sup>61</sup> and Bardin,<sup>62</sup> had duly surveyed by daylight the position for these trenches. Jenkins was mortally wounded, but Bardin brought in an accurate plan, on which Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholson<sup>63</sup> of the 1st Pioneers personally laid out the jumping-off trench-line in the difficult sector on the right, where his men undertook the digging. The only adequate trenches in that area were those of the wide old German second-line—O.G. 1 and 2—with their deep, well-lined dug-outs and massive traverses, which, though subjected to constant enfilade with German shrapnel, afforded fairly comfortable shelter to the British troops who still furnished their garrison.

The new conditions were, however, in some respects at first welcomed by the Australians. Over and above the change and excitement, the troops were much less closely confined than at Armentières. During every big operation and for days afterwards it was unnecessary to observe extreme caution in order to hide individual movement from the enemy. Even in the front line it was generally possible to glance over the parapet without danger. The use of periscopes was almost unknown during the Battle of the Somme, and indeed was never again so general among Australians as in the old lines at Armentières and Anzac. In the rear areas under enemy observation, although the movement of a platoon or a ration-party, if observed, might call down an ugly barrage, it was usually possible for troops to stand, even in groups, watching a bombardment or an

<sup>61</sup> Lieut. E. E. Jenkins, 1st Pioneer Bn. University student; of Malvern and Ivanhoe, Vic.; b. Ararat, Vic., 6 Jan., 1888. Died of wounds, 20 July, 1916.

<sup>62</sup> Capt. A. H. Bardin, M.C.; 1st Pioneer Bn. Architect and land surveyor; b. Rathmines, Dublin, Ireland, 1886.

<sup>63</sup> Lieut.-Col. E. J. H. Nicholson, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 1st Pioneer Bn., 1916/17; C.R.E., 2nd Aust. Div., 1917; C.R.E., Aust. Corps Troops, 1917/18. Mineral buyer; of Claremont, W. Aust.; b. Gravesend, Kent, Eng., 17 April, 1870.

air-fight, without the enemy firing upon them; on days of actual fighting, the German artillery was far too busy with the attacking troops to attend to any but urgent targets. The farther areas, in which bivouacked the reserve battalions of the front-line brigades, or the advanced battalions of brigades coming to relieve them, were now practically free from the enemy's observation, the French and British flying corps having almost entirely suppressed his air-patrols.<sup>64</sup> For two days the men of the Australian reserve battalions roamed at will over the ruins of La Boisselle, exploring its dugouts still crowded with German and British dead, and incidentally learning many of the new conditions of the battlefield without any interference from the enemy. It is true that one or two German balloons occasionally appeared above the horizon, to be hurriedly hauled to earth on the approach of British or French airmen; and, perhaps once or twice a week when the sky was brilliant, an enemy aeroplane, or sometimes a flight, moving so high as to be barely visible, would be seen overhead, slowly passing, as one soldier put it, "like a louse crawling on a blue quilt." The enemy, however, had practically "been deprived of his eyes," with the result that a mile or two behind the battle-line of the Allies the bare slopes became covered with the bivouacs of troops, horse-lines, and dumps, until they resembled a huge scattered fair, or a new-found mining-field in which, after dark, hundreds of camp fires twinkled in every direction.<sup>65</sup> Another offset against the greater tension of the Somme lay in the fact—not at first realised—that the troops were henceforth almost free from the constant danger of poison-gas in cloud form: under such bombardment as the enemy was now receiving, the instalment of gas-cylinders would have been too difficult and dangerous for him. Henceforth he was likely to confine himself to gas-shell, which, though more effective, was not nearly so much dreaded by his opponents.

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<sup>64</sup> A French airman was, however, shot down by several German machines over the O.G. Lines on the morning of July 20, and fell near the trenches of the 9th Battalion, A.I.F. The Australian brigades which witnessed the incident were consoled the same evening by seeing a German aeroplane shot down by a British airman.

<sup>65</sup> These were the incinerator fires and those used for cooking. Their number was not greatly reduced even when G.H.Q. issued an order that such lights must be suppressed.

At a very early stage the state of affairs in the forward area convinced Generals Walker and MacLagan that any attempt to hurry forward the attack on Pozières without allowing time for thorough preparation might result in both failure and the wrecking of their troops. Jumping-off trenches within 200 yards of the enemy had not been completed even for the first wave, and the 9th Battalion, which was to advance along and beside the O.G. Lines, had not yet been able to place its companies in position. Fortunately Generals Birdwood and White, who, though as yet given no responsibility on the battlefield, were most courteously consulted by the Reserve Army authorities,<sup>66</sup> had secured several modifications in the plans, among which was a postponement of the attack to the night of July 21st. They also obtained consent for the extension of the first operation to more important objectives than the trenches in front of the village, their reason being a well-founded conviction that the 1st Australian Division would put into the advance an impetus sufficient to carry it at least half-way through the village. Thereupon Pozières Trench became merely the first objective; the second, to be taken half-an-hour later, was the edge of the orchards—or, rather, a newly-begun German trench which was supposed to skirt them. A convenient guiding-mark to this objective was a disused line of light railway, visible just in front of it.<sup>67</sup> The third objective, to be attacked half-an-hour after the second, was the southern side of the main road, from the isolated orchard west of the village to the O.G. Lines east of it near the windmill. The 1st Brigade would capture the western half, the 3rd Brigade the eastern, including the O.G. Lines. West of this front the 48th Division (X Corps) would attack in the manner already described.<sup>68</sup> East of it the 1st British Division (III Corps) would assault “Munster Alley.”

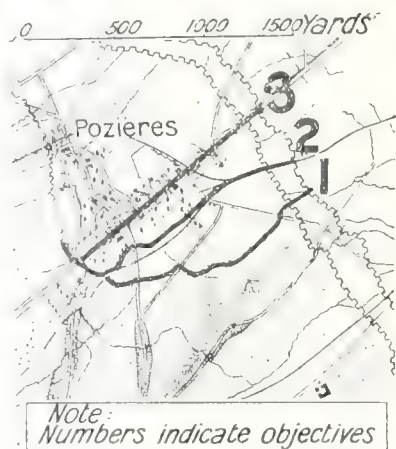
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<sup>66</sup> The headquarters of I Anzac was on July 19 moved forward to Contay.

<sup>67</sup> This light railway ran from Bapaume through Le Sars to Martinpuich, and thence, crossing the O.G. Lines 200 yards south of the Bapaume road at a point marked by two trees, to the south-eastern end of Pozières. Here it divided into three branches. The one mentioned above skirted the south of the village and passed on to La Boisselle. The central prong ran into a copse at Pozières, feeding a battery. The third prong skirted the north of the village and passed on to Ovillers. Both the northern and southern branches became important landmarks. (A fragment of the old rails, shattered by bombardment, is in the Australian War Memorial collection.)

<sup>68</sup> See pp. 476-7.

The addition of objectives up to the main road necessitated a sweeping alteration in the orders and careful elaboration of the plans for the artillery barrages. Of these there would now be four main phases—first, a hurricane bombardment of Pozières Trench and the O.G. Lines for two minutes before the infantry attacked; then half-an-hour's bombardment of the second objective while the infantry attacked and consolidated the first; then half-an-hour's bombardment of the third objective while the infantry attacked the second; finally a



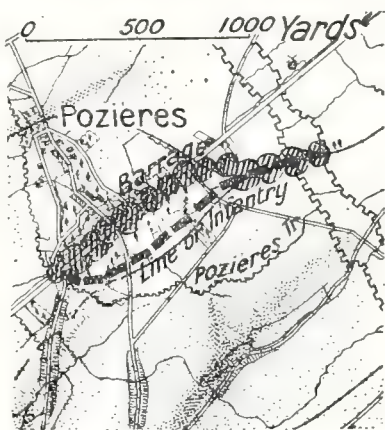
barrage 100 yards north of the main street while the infantry seized and entrenched along its southern side, which was the third objective. The bombardments that were to follow the first, while not so furious, would serve as fairly solid barrages, the field-guns firing at the rate of one and a half rounds per gun per minute;<sup>69</sup> this would give one burst per minute on each fifteen yards of front, in addition to the shells of the 4.5-inch howitzers and other heavier pieces beyond and the barrages on the flanks. As for the action of the infantry, under the system which the troops had been practising,<sup>70</sup> each objective would be seized by a different line. In each brigade the two front-line battalions would furnish the first two lines of attack, half of the two support battalions being allotted to the third wave and their other halves held as immediate reserves. Each line consisted of two waves. While one was consolidating the position it had gained, the next would move through it and lie down as close as possible to the shells bursting on the next objective, ready to attack that objective as soon as the barrage was observed to lift. Inasmuch as the barrages were to be laid down not only by the artillery of the 1st Australian Division firing from the south-west over its troops, but also by that of the X Corps and 25th Division firing more from the west (in some cases

<sup>69</sup> The rate was changed in a subsequent order to 2 rounds per minute.

<sup>70</sup> See pp. 452-4.



almost in the face of the attack), and as three separate staffs<sup>71</sup> were responsible for the somewhat hurried drawing of the plans, General White was acutely apprehensive of a blunder. Though not officially concerned, since the division was then acting directly under the staff of the Army, he discovered, on the eve of the intended action, that the proposed line of the barrage after its second lift fell fairly across that laid down for the right of the infantry. Birdwood's artillery commander, Brigadier-General Cunliffe Owen, was accordingly at once sent to Walker's headquarters, and the plans were again changed, the barrage-lines being straightened and the artillery of the X Corps restricted to zones of fire on the flanks of the attack, or at a safe distance ahead. To permit of these and other changes, the date of the operation was at the last moment, for the second time, deferred for twenty-four hours.



Brigadiers were informed late on the afternoon of July 21st. Current opinion being then in favour of night operations, at least where heavy machine-gun fire was anticipated and the objective was close and well-marked, the assault was ordered to be delivered at half-an-hour after midnight on the morning of Sunday, July 23rd.<sup>72</sup>

It will be evident from this narrative that the projected seizure of Pozieres had at times been regarded as a separate

<sup>71</sup> Those of Reserve Army, X Corps, and 1st Australian Division. The artillery of the 25th Division, but not its infantry, was in the line under command of the X Corps.

<sup>72</sup> The time originally fixed was 11.30 p.m. on July 22, but Walker secured the extension in order to give his troops on the right more time to move into position along their narrow and only approach—Black Watch Alley. Half-an-hour being allowed for the capture of each objective and preparation for the next advance, the programme was:

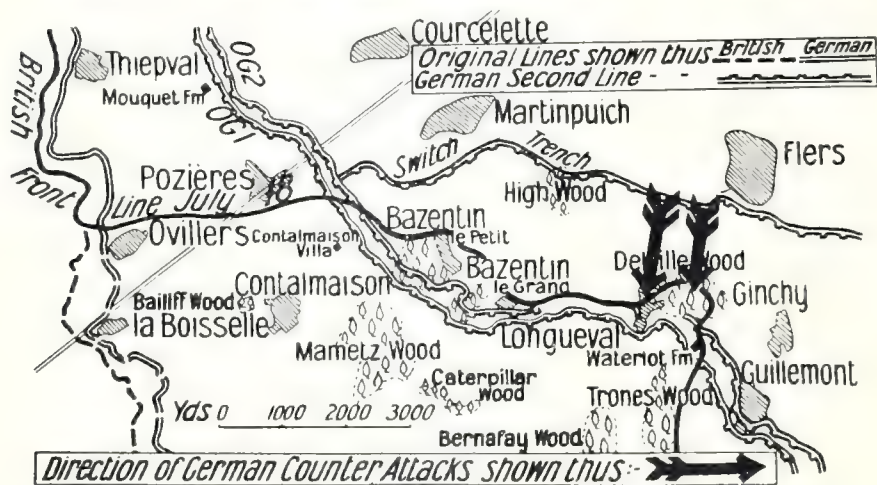
1st barrage, 12.28-12.30 a.m., followed by attack on 1st objective, 12.30.

2nd barrage, 12.30-1 a.m., followed by attack on 2nd objective, 1 a.m.

3rd barrage, 1-1.30 a.m., followed by attack on 3rd objective, 1.30 a.m.

4th barrage, 1.30 a.m., to continue for half-an-hour, protecting troops while they dug in, and then gradually to diminish in intensity (unless otherwise ordered).

operation, independent of other large operations on the battlefield and not even simultaneous with them.<sup>73</sup> The reasons appear to have been that the attacks of the Fourth Army had to be fitted in with those of the French; that it was not always easy to provide sufficient artillery and ammunition for simultaneous operations on a wide front; and that each army and often each corps had its special problem. While the offensive in question was being planned, the Fourth Army had, by the action of the enemy, been set a special and difficult task, the expected German counter-attack<sup>74</sup> having on the afternoon of July 18th fallen with tremendous weight upon Delville Wood. The South African Brigade, after very heavy loss, had been driven out of the wood, and part of the 3rd Division from the north of Longueval. The recapture of both places was immediately



<sup>73</sup> It had already been tentatively fixed for the following dates:

For July 17, to be coincident with attacks by the XIII Corps on Guillemont and Ginchy, and the XV Corps on the Switch Trench. The weather caused postponement.

For July 18, coincident with a wide offensive by the Fourth Army, Reserve Army, and French. The weather again caused postponement of the wider offensive.

For July 18, as a separate operation. The preliminary attack failed, and the task was handed over to Reserve Army.

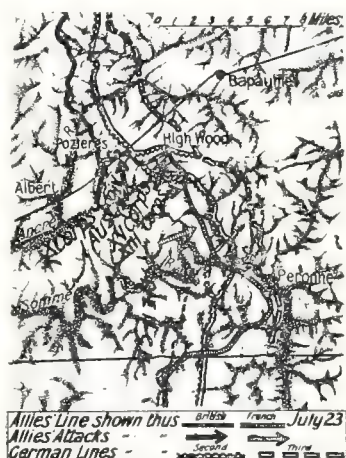
For the nights of July 20/21 or 21/22, apparently as a separate operation. Postponed because the arrangements of the 1st Australian Division and the artillery were not complete.

At 12.30 a.m. on July 23, as a separate operation, an offensive by the Fourth Army against the Switch Trench and Ginchy being launched a few hours earlier.

<sup>74</sup> See p. 462.

attempted, and, in order to relieve pressure, the projected offensive against the Switch Trench was forthwith undertaken by the Fourth Army in conjunction with an attack by the whole of the French Sixth Army on July 20th.<sup>75</sup> The British attacks met at first with partial success, but afterwards—except for some gains at High Wood—completely failed; it was not until July 27th, after desperate fighting, that Delville Wood was recaptured.

It was during this difficult time that the offensive of July 23rd was planned and launched as a single great stroke, the Fourth Army at the last moment postponing the "zero" hour of its northward attack to coincide with that of the Reserve Army's assault,<sup>76</sup> and the French also attacking on their front north of the Somme. The Pozières operation would form the extreme left of the main assault; but on its left again the 48th Division (X Corps) was to endeavour to keep touch by securing, as the Australians advanced, part of the series of communication trenches running westward from "K" Trench north of the Bapaume road to the old German front-line system. These had originally been intended as thoroughfares between the first and second systems, but now served as "switches" along which the German front line in that sector naturally lay.<sup>77</sup>



One local advantage by which it had been hoped to assist the right Australian brigade at the point of junction of the two armies was not secured. The posts in the O.G. Lines which the 1st British Division had hoped to hand over were not attained either by it or by the 1st Australian Division

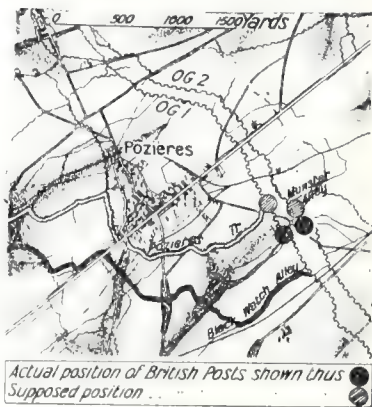
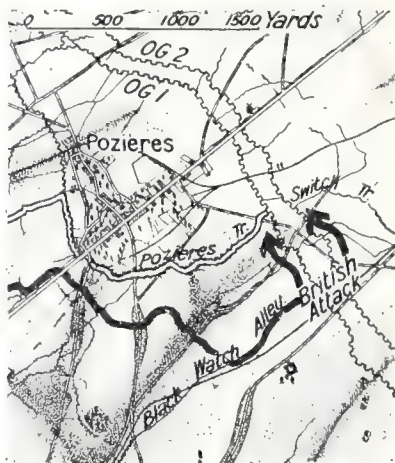
<sup>75</sup> The XX French Corps north of the Somme, and the XXV Corps south of it, advanced well, but the I Colonial Corps, between the two, failed.

<sup>76</sup> One slight discrepancy remained: the intense bombardment immediately preceding the Fourth Army's assault would last four minutes instead of two, a circumstance which might be somewhat confusing to the troops at the point where the two armies joined.

<sup>77</sup> They were known as "1st" to "6th" Avenues.



before the main operation. These points were of some importance, being those where Pozières Trench ran out of O.G.1 and the Switch Trench out of O.G.2. The two junctions happened to lie opposite each other, though separated by the interval between the two O.G. trenches—at this point 150 yards. Several attempts had already been made to seize the junction of Switch Trench and O.G.2. On July 18th the Munster Fusiliers (of the 3rd British Brigade) attacked it simultaneously with an attempt to capture part of the Switch. The Munsters reached the junction, and their name was thenceforth given to the neighbouring portion of the Switch—"Munster Alley." They were soon afterwards driven from that position, but it was thought that the point where Pozières Trench and O.G.1 forked had been attained and consolidated. Such positions, however, were no longer easy to identify, the incessant bombardment falling on Pozières and its neighbourhood having destroyed many of the surrounding landmarks.<sup>78</sup> Thus the 2nd British Brigade discovered that both its own front posts and those of the Germans were still some distance south of the junction. This was the reason for postponing the Australian relief in the O.G. Lines, and, on the night of July 19th, the 1st Northamptonshire (2nd British Brigade) attempted under cover of a Stokes mortar bombardment to capture



<sup>78</sup> The Reserve Army had informed the 1st Australian Division that O.G.1 would be handed over to it, up to and including the communication trench running between O.G.1 and O.G.2 just *beyond* that point. The point actually attained was just short of a similar communication trench between the two lines, 120 yards farther south.





35. THE KING INSPECTING THE ENTRANCE OF A DUGOUT IN THE OLD GERMAN FRONT-TRENCH SYSTEM ON THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD, AUGUST 1916

*British Official Photograph.*



36. BRITISH INFANTRYMEN ON THE SOMME OCCUPYING TRENCHES SIMILAR TO SOME OF THOSE IN WHICH THE AUSTRALIANS RELIEVED THEM

*British Official Photograph.*

*To face p. 488.*



37. PART OF A BATTERY OF BRITISH 4.7-INCH GUNS IN "SAUSAGE VALLEY," POZIÈRES

Australian waggons returning down the valley.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. EZ72.  
Taken in August 1916.*

both junctions. No sooner had the mortars begun to fire than the enemy opened with machine-guns, of which at least six in various parts of the area were covering the spot. The assault failed, the British party on the parapet of O.G.1 being all killed or wounded, and those attacking O.G.2 suffering heavily. At 3.30 a.m. another attempt was made by bombing along the O.G. Lines, but the German bombers were in strength and retained their posts. The Northamptonshires lost sixty-five in all,<sup>79</sup> and, when Captain Knightley's company of the 9th Australian Battalion that day took over the front in O.G.1, the advanced British posts in both trenches were still 150 yards short of the desired positions. A third attempt was accordingly made at 2.30 a.m. on July 22nd by the 9th Battalion. It had been intended first to bombard the German posts thoroughly with two Australian medium trench-mortars, and then, at the moment of assault, to stifle the machine-guns by a light barrage of the 18-pounder shells thrown beyond the objective. The commencement of this barrage would be the signal for the attack. Two parties, each of fifty-one men, under Lieutenants Monteath<sup>80</sup> and Biggs<sup>81</sup> respectively assembled at the heads of the positions in O.G. 1 and 2, the British garrison in the latter trench making room. At 1.55 the trench-mortars began to fire, but ceased at 2.10 a.m., having come to the end of their ammunition, of which, through some grave error, only fourteen rounds were at hand. At 2.25 Monteath and Biggs led out their men and lay up, as ordered, forty yards beyond, waiting for the barrage. The night, however, was continuously disturbed by the slow bombardment of Pozières and by the constant reply from the enemy, and, as not infrequently happened in later fights, it was impossible to distinguish the light barrage from the other shells bursting intermittently around. After waiting until 2.32 Monteath reported that he could see no barrage, and was then ordered by Major

<sup>79</sup> Munster Alley was gained at one point, but could not be held, as the junction with O.G.2 remained uncaptured.

<sup>80</sup> Capt. C. D. Monteath, M.C.; 9th Bn. Accountant; of Benalla, Vic.; b. 3 Sept., 1888.

<sup>81</sup> Capt. F. J. Biggs, 9th Bn. Engineering student; of Brisbane; b. Brisbane, 1 Oct., 1895.



Salisbury, who was in charge of the enterprise, to advance. Monteath's party made their way in the moonlight up the wide hollow of the empty trench, and were, as they thought, about half-way to the point where they would meet opposition, when there burst among them a succession of "egg-bombs"—small egg-shaped missiles, hand-thrown, and often used by the Germans against an enemy who was beyond the range of their heavier stick-bombs. The Australian party, crowded in the trench, fell literally in heaps. A few jumped out of the trench into shell-holes on either side, and thence endeavoured to bomb the Germans. Monteath and Lance-Corporal Ross<sup>82</sup> managed to get far enough forward to see whence the opposition was coming. A bomb's throw ahead the trench appeared to come to a dead end, being blocked by a ramp or mound of earth from behind which the enemy were evidently throwing. The Australians outside the trench were suddenly driven back into it by a fierce fire of machine-guns at close range sweeping the open. Monteath, with the survivors, endeavoured to hold on, but the ability to do so depended on the receipt of a continuous supply of bombs. Machine-guns sweeping the exposed area rendered the task of carrying forward a supply almost impossible. Sergeant Browne,<sup>83</sup> in support, handed over his platoon to his corporal, and attempted to cross the open with bombs, but was immediately killed. The attack failed, as did also that in O.G.2, resulting in heavy casualties. The reserves were then brought up and a fresh attempt organised; but day was breaking, and, upon the leader climbing out of the trench, the enemy machine-guns opened so promptly that the enterprise, being obviously hopeless, was countermanded.

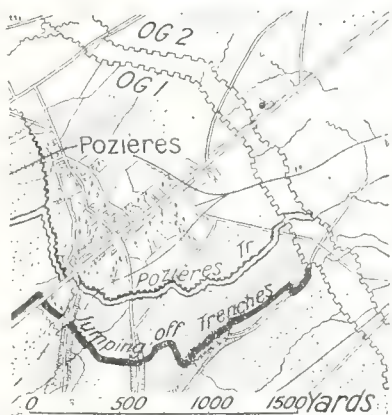
Meanwhile the successive postponements of the 1st Australian Division's main enterprise had given time for the 1st Pioneers and engineers on the right, supplemented by working parties from the reserve battalions on the left, to complete the "jumping-off" trenches. In spite of casualties several sections of long straight excavation were thus provided for

<sup>82</sup> Cpl. P. H. Ross (No. 4282; 9th Bn.). Farmer; of Brisbane and Maryborough, Q'land; b. Edinburgh, Scotland, 9 Aug., 1885.

<sup>83</sup> Sgt. P. G. Browne (No. 3270A; 9th Bn.). University student; of Brisbane; b. Gwampegwine Station, Taroom, Q'land, 8 June, 1895. Killed in action, 22 July, 1916.



the assembly of the waves prior to the assault.<sup>84</sup> The systematic bombardment of Pozzières by heavy artillery in preparation for this attack had begun at 2 a.m. on July 19th, and among the units participating was one of the Australian siege batteries, which happened to be moved that day to Fricourt<sup>85</sup> so as to enfilade the O.G. Lines. The bombardment continued intermittently for four days, the targets on July 19th being largely roads and barricades, and on the 21st houses, trenches, and strong-points. On



the front of the III Corps (Fourth Army) farther east the bombardment fell mainly on the Switch Trench, the O.G. Lines, and their approaches; but the weather, though now fine and warm, was not favourable for air-photography, and shortly before the attack the III Corps staff was informed by its front-line troops that the enemy had been observed in new positions much in advance of the Switch. On the Pozzières front the Germans had commenced a second-line near the outskirts of the orchards, but Reserve Army had ordered the Australian field batteries—which began to register on July 19th—and machine-guns to keep this area under fire throughout the night of the 20th, and the excavation seems

<sup>84</sup> In the right brigade's sector on the first night the pioneers had, without casualties, dug a trench a foot deep; on the second night, though suffering casualties, they dug deep enough to obtain cover; after the third night parties under Major Holland were able to work in these trenches during daylight.

<sup>85</sup> The two Australian siege batteries and their headquarters were not always together. The 36th (Australian) Heavy Artillery Group Headquarters had originally taken them both to France—the 54th (later 1st Australian) equipped with 8-inch howitzers, and the 55th (later 2nd Australian) with 9.2-inch howitzers. On arrival at Maroeuil, near Arras, the group headquarters controlled those batteries and three British. In June, 1916, it moved to Bouzincourt, near Albert, where the group headquarters controlled on June 14 six British siege batteries and only one Australian (55th). These batteries were then firing on Pozzières, Courcellette, and Thiepval. On July 5 the 36th Group and 54th and 55th Batteries, then near Mailly-Mailly, formed part of the quota of the Fourth Army's artillery which was transferred to Reserve Army. On the 19th the 55th Battery moved to Fricourt and was shortly afterwards transferred to the 45th Heavy Artillery Group, which was temporarily allotted to the 1st Australian Division. Of necessity the group headquarters, though an Australian unit, was at this stage often commanded by British officers. It was not permanently reunited with both its batteries until the organization of the Australian Army Corps at the end of 1917. (*Australian Siege Brigade in the Great War*—in manuscript form—by Major G. E. Manchester.)

to have been abandoned. The 1st Australian Division's medium and heavy trench-mortars<sup>86</sup> in the Chalk Pit also fired during the following days, but through heavy casualties and other difficulties were forced to cease.

During these days some of the Australian infantry, both in the reserve area and in certain parts of the front line from which the village was visible, had their first opportunity of observing at close range the tremendous power of the new British artillery. The strain of the bombardment had put an end to any sniping in Pozières; although upon actual attack the garrison might be ready to rush to its machine-gun positions, it had given up all notion of carrying on individual shooting during the day. It was therefore possible—even from an advanced post of the 2nd Battalion, only eighty yards from the orchards of Pozières<sup>87</sup>—to watch the bombardment practically without danger, except from the huge flakes of British heavy shell which flew back overhead after some of the more powerful bursts. Although it was mid-summer, only one of the ragged tree-trunks in the copses and back gardens which screened the village retained its curtain of leaves; the rest had been stripped and shredded by the bombardments of the past ten days, and through the bare stems could be seen the pink or white ruins of a few remaining walls. Every minute, when some heavy projectile burst in the débris, dense pink and grey clouds rolled upwards, gradually melting into dust-haze. Above the dry trees there exploded occasionally, four at a time, shells of a strange type embodying some new experiment in the devilry of war—forming grey-green clouds, each emitting a long tongue of orange flame which leisurely unrolled itself earthwards and then vanished.<sup>88</sup> Intermittent bursts of shrapnel threshed the dry ground and sent little whirls of dust hurrying through the copses or along the line of the main road behind the

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<sup>86</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 217.

<sup>87</sup> The 2nd Battalion had sent forward patrols along a sap leading to the enemy's line, and established a barricade or "bombing-stop" at this point. Most of the 1st Brigade's front line—taken over from the 68th Brigade—was well down the slope of Contalmaison Valley, and therefore out of sight of the Germans. From Black Watch Alley, however, Pozières and the O.G. Lines were visible.

<sup>88</sup> These were "thermite" shells intended to set fire to trees and ruins. The 1st Battery, A.F.A., fired 119 on July 21, but the shells on that occasion had no incendiary effect.

trees. Yet under this protracted torture men had been observed, more than once, moving through the wood, apparently small parties sent to reinforce; and a single figure had been observed hurrying over the uneven ground, and afterwards returning, evidently a messenger from some occupied point to another.

During the afternoon before the fight the Australian infantry destined for the attack sat in their cramped trenches<sup>89</sup> under the hot sun, cleaning their rifles, packing their haversacks, writing home letters, or snatching their last sleep before the battle. To prevent the battalions from being crippled, as had often happened in earlier battles, by the loss of practically all their officers, a proportion of those in each unit had on the previous day been ordered back to Albert. These included the second-in-command, assistant adjutant, and at least one of the senior officers of each company. In the front line only twenty officers of each battalion were left, these including its commander and adjutant, but not the quartermaster, whose post was at the advanced ration-dump possibly a mile in rear of the trenches, and the transport officer, who commanded at the regimental transport lines farther back and daily brought up the rations to the dump. During July 22nd the officers remaining at the front carefully checked their watches at stated hours by those at brigade headquarters. Telephone wires were laid to the new headquarters, which, for the 1st Brigade, would be the cramped niche, previously mentioned,<sup>90</sup> in the bank beside the Chalk Pit road, and, for the 3rd, a deep German dugout below a cellar at the north-west corner of Contalmaison. Phosphorus bombs, for smoking the enemy out of dugouts, had been distributed, one to each man, and two Mills bombs, one to be carried in each side-pocket. At 7 p.m., as the sun neared his setting, the bombardment of the Fourth Army along the battle-front to the east began. Three hours after dark the artillery of the Reserve Army, which, after several hours' bombardment, had eased at sundown, increased its fire on and around Pozzières.

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<sup>89</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 198, for a scene typical of this day.

<sup>90</sup> See p. 476.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE TAKING OF POZIÈRES

THE bombardment with which the battle of July 23rd began was famous even among the many famous bombardments on the Western Front. Occurring as it did at night, before the rise of the moon, it was visible for nearly twenty miles around. Men of the 2nd Australian Division, whose foremost brigade that night bivouacked at the brickfield on the slope immediately in rear of Albert, watched in hundreds the flickering halo from the batteries hidden in the folds before them, and the burst of the shells on the horizon, where lay the enemy's trenches. The fire was mainly that of the Fourth Army. The scene from the rear areas of the battlefield, which by night resembled a vast desolate moorland, is described in the diary of an Australian:

From the open before Fricourt we saw the skyline simply alive with light. Flashes like summer lightning were quite continuous, making one flickering band of light; but this was away in the east behind Fricourt and Montauban. Clearly the British were doing something there. Every now and then a low lurid red flush, very angry, lit the horizon. All around the horizon shells were flashing and the pretty starlights making their graceful curves, a dozen or a score at a time in all quarters to east and north. Occasionally a red light or a rocket bursting into green stars, and the twinkle of shrapnel like the flash of a match which won't light or the glow of a match-end.

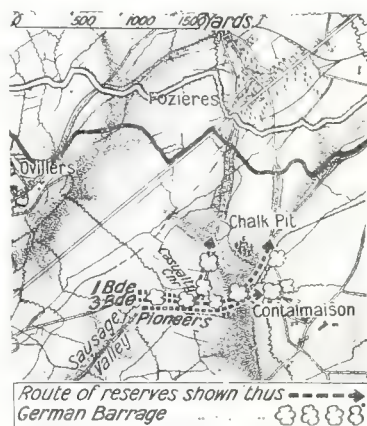
The battalions which were to seize the first two objectives—Pozières Trench and the village outskirts—were already in the front-line area; those furnishing the troops for the third objective—the line of the main street—were in some cases bivouacked near the head of Sausage Valley, and in others as far away as La Boisselle. About 10 p.m. these left their bivouacs and filed towards the front, while the pioneer battalion and engineer companies, which were to dig communication trenches and strong-points, made their way towards a rendezvous behind a ruined house in Contalmaison.<sup>1</sup> While this movement was in progress the artillery of the

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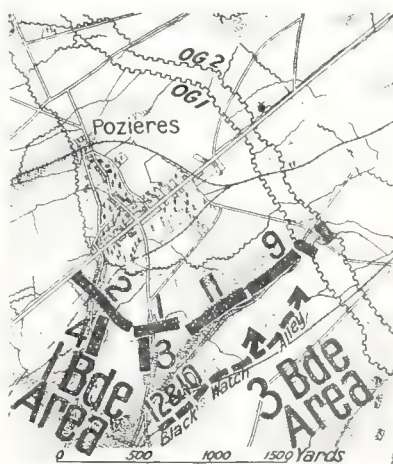
<sup>1</sup> Capt. H. F. Hübbe (of Burnside, S. Aust.), adjutant of the 1st Pioneer Battalion, was killed while the battalion was moving to the attack. Its chaplain, the Rev. R. A. Harris (of Manly, N.S.W.), accompanied it into action.



Reserve Army increased its fire on the Pozzières plateau. The Germans, who had been awaiting daily the attack on Pozzières, at once laid down a precautionary barrage, which mostly passed over the Australian front-line area but fell heavily upon that through which troops destined for the third objective and for reserves must march. The road past Casualty Corner to Contalmaison was intermittently swept with shrapnel and high-explosive, and drenched with phosgene gas-shell. At times the corner could only be passed by men running one at a time; those who were hit had to crawl away from the place as best they could, their mates having at that moment one paramount duty—to reach their starting-point for the attack.



While the battalions furnishing the third line of the attack were thus approaching the assembly trenches which they had helped to dig on previous nights, those allotted for the first two lines adjusted their front so as to face, in the "jumping-off" trenches, as nearly as possible the objective allotted to each. The order of the battalions is shown in the marginal sketch. In the left, or 1st Brigade, sector, a reinforcement officer of the 1st Battalion and some scouts crept out and pegged down, 100 yards from the German trench, a line of tape upon which the first wave was to form. The ground in front of the 3rd Brigade, part of which was under close observation of the Germans in O.G.I, had been reconnoitred on previous nights



by Lieutenants Nicol<sup>2</sup> and Hastings<sup>3</sup> of the 11th Battalion, Nicol being shot dead by a sniping bullet on the night of July 22nd. Hastings had survived, but was now killed as he crept over to find the neighbouring flank of the 1st Brigade. About ten minutes after midnight men and officers of the first wave of the first line crept forward from their jumping-off trenches in order to approach the German position before the final bombardment began. The second wave followed at twenty or thirty yards interval after the first. Brilliant white flares rose from Pozières, close ahead, and to the right along the O.G. Lines, but the troops, crawling low, were mostly hidden by the fall of the ground and by thistle tufts which fringed the older shell-holes. Earlier in the night the 2nd Battalion had, as a precaution, cleared a trench bordering the northern side of the Bapaume road, driving back a German patrol. This stage of an attack was always an anxious one; if the enemy, before the barrage was upon him, discovered the troops lying out, he might shatter them with unimpeded machine-gun fire, and signal his artillery to lay down a crushing barrage on their backs. On this occasion any sound of men crawling forward may have been drowned by a feint bombardment laid down twenty-five minutes before "zero" by the 25th Divisional Artillery upon "K" Trench, in order to give the impression that Pozières would be attacked from the west; but there was always the chance that movement might be seen. About 12.24, as the 2nd Battalion crept towards the copses south-west of the village, there shot up among the white flares a rocket which burst into red stars. This probably meant that the enemy had seen men moving. Some rifle and machine-gun fire opened, but not heavier than would break out on ordinary nights if the enemy chanced to sight a patrol. On the far right some of the 9th Battalion were undoubtedly seen by Germans from the O.G. Lines; and, as they crept between the thistles and shell-holes, there came from close ahead the order "Halt!" Every man remained still as death, but a machine-gun opened from the

<sup>2</sup> Lieut. J. G. Nicol, 11th Bn. Monumental sculptor; of Subiaco, W. Aust.; b. Fitzroy, Vic., 20 Aug., 1894. Killed in action, 22 July, 1916.

<sup>3</sup> Lieut. W. G. Hastings, 11th Bn. Bank accountant; of Gosford, N.S.W., and Perth, W. Aust.; b. at sea, 25 June, 1877. Killed in action, 22 July, 1916.



38. A HOWITZER OF THE AUSTRALIAN SIEGE ARTILLERY BRIGADE, WHOSE BATTERIES WERE AMONG THOSE SUPPORTING THE 1 ANZAC CORPS AT POZIÈRES

Photograph taken in summer of 1916.





39. AIR VIEW OF THE CENTRE AND NORTHERN ARM OF POZIÈRES VILLAGE  
BEFORE BOMBARDMENT HAD SHATTERED THE TREES OR MOST OF THE  
BUILDINGS

Bordering the left of the village is "K" Trench.

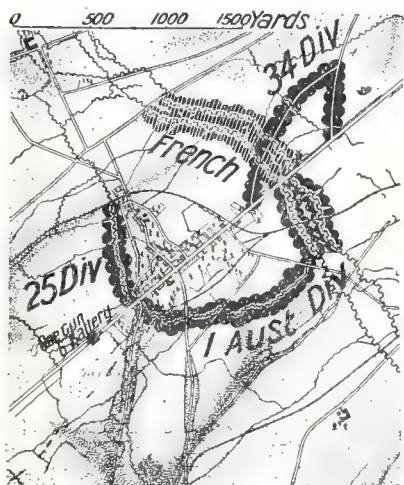
*British Air Force Photograph.  
Taken apparently in June 1916.*

*To face p. 497.*



direction of the O.G. Lines, hitting probably some of the 9th and also of the 11th, who, though farther away, had to crawl over an exposed knuckle.

The troops had been instructed to push forward close to the line of their own barrage, accepting some risk of being hit by their own shells. Australian infantry, usually straining on the leash to get near the enemy, required little urging to do this, the task of their officers being almost always to hold them back. During the half-hour preceding the attack the first wave of the 3rd Brigade and part of the 1st Battalion had in some places crawled to within less than fifty yards<sup>4</sup> of the German trench, of which the parapet could be seen close ahead. At 12.28 there suddenly burst upon that trench the full fire of the 1st Australian Division's field artillery, while the batteries of the 25th and 48th Divisions fired on the west and north sides of Pozières, and those of the 34th Division and some French artillery on the O.G. Lines and crest farther east. The heavy guns bombarded trenches and traffic junctions in rear. A gun of the 6th Battery, A.F.A., which, with muffled wheels and harness, had been brought up the Bapaume road and thence dragged forward by its crew under Lieutenant Thurnhill<sup>5</sup> to a point within 400 yards of the village, began to fire 115 rounds at point-blank range down the main street.<sup>6</sup> In the battery positions the Australian gunners, for the first time in the experience of most, had for two minutes free leave to fire



*1st Phase of Field Artillery Barrage.  
(Names indicate divisions by whose  
guns the barrage was thrown.)*

<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant Belford of the 11th Battalion afterwards estimated the distance of his line from the enemy parapet as "20 to 30 yards." Major P. L. Howell-Price stated that the front wave of the 1st Battalion was "40 yards from Pozières Trench."

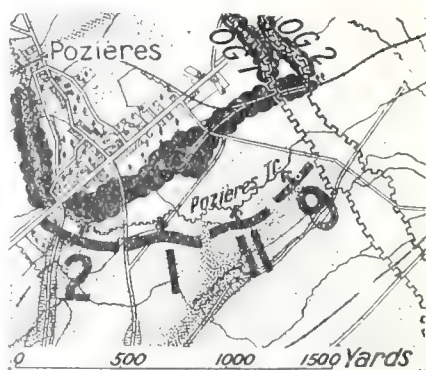
<sup>5</sup> Lieut. S. R. Thurnhill, M.C.; 6th Bty., A.F.A. Farmer; of Doodenanning, W. Aust.; b. Whalley Range, Manchester, Eng., 5 July, 1891. Killed in action, 6 Nov., 1916.

<sup>6</sup> This gun was fired from the main road, 200 yards from the southern end of K Trench, which was held by the Germans. The ammunition waggon was placed so as to screen the crew from machine-gun fire from that trench, and there were no casualties.

as fast as they could load, their shells pouring upon Pozières Trench immediately in front of the crouching infantry. The trench became illuminated by a continuous band of bursting shrapnel so accurately thrown that, except by one gun which fired short on the left, the infantry was untouched. Under cover of this, parts of the line, which by the fall of the ground had hitherto been prevented from approaching within stone-throw, now crept nearer.

At 12.30 the 1st Division's guns lifted their fire to the line of the orchards, which they bombarded at a much slower rate,<sup>7</sup> the more distant barrages mostly continuing as before. This general shell-fire rendered it difficult for officers and men of the infantry to be certain when the barrage lifted, and the officers' whistles could not be heard in the tumult; but the men saw them scrambling to their feet, and, rising with them, rushed for Pozières Trench. A few Germans were found in it on the left, a number in the centre, and several machine-guns at various points.

At the south-western end of the village a machine-gun crew had just mounted their weapon and fired two or three shots when the line reached and shot or bayoneted them. Farther to the right the 1st and 11th Battalions rushed a pocket of about sixty, who surrendered. Still more to the right, in front of the O.G. Lines, where the 3rd Brigade stumbled forward over the shell-holes, Pozières Trench was in places hardly recognisable among the craters, and there was little resistance. One German tried to club

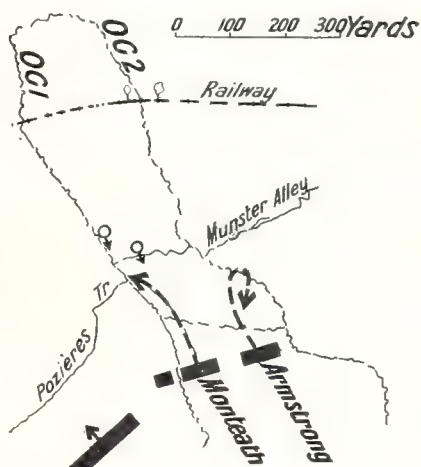


2nd Phase of Barrage and 1st Attack.  
(Barrage in thick black.)

<sup>7</sup> Two rounds per gun per minute for the 18-pounders. The Australian 4.5-inch howitzers during this stage (12-12.30 a.m.) fired at the same rate, shooting at strong points in rear, and the 6-inch howitzers, which barraged a line beyond that of the 18-pounders, fired 40 rounds. In the next stage (12.30-1) the 18-pounders fired two rounds per minute and the 4.5-inch howitzers one. From 1 to 1.30 the 18-pounders reduced their rate to 1½ rounds per minute, the 6-inch howitzers meanwhile continuing to fire, chiefly on or about Pozières Windmill, at the rate of 80 rounds an hour. Most of the supporting artillery then eased down, but the Australian guns, being required by their infantry, continued the barrage much longer.

an Australian with his rifle; another, standing in a shell-hole among four comrades who wished to surrender, bravely threw a bomb; all were immediately killed. A machine-gun barked from the right, wounding, among others, Major Milner<sup>8</sup> of the 11th. But Pozzières Trench was carried at once, practically without opposition, and the two waves of the second line, which had started forward when the bombardment opened, almost immediately came up, passed through the men of the first, and lay up near the barrage ready to assault the second objective along the back hedges of the village.

Only on the extreme right, in the O.G. Lines, did the first attack meet with heavy resistance. On this night the leading platoon of the 9th in O.G.1 was again commanded by Lieutenant Monteath, that in O.G.2 being under Lieutenant Armstrong.<sup>9</sup> The German posts had been specially shelled for two hours by heavy artillery, and on this occasion the attacking troops were disposed in line across the open from O.G.1 to O.G.2, and not—as on the 22nd—crowded in the trenches. As they advanced they were fired at from ahead, and the line was obliged to split into two parties. That with Monteath swept past the position from which they had been bombed the night before, and the junction of Pozzières Trench, finding both empty. From a point not far in front, however, the fire of two machine-guns forced the line to take cover in the trench, and from this position a discharge of bombs was kept up. Here the attack was for a time held up, the Germans with their egg-bombs out-throwing the Australians; but, before means could be devised of ending the deadlock, a man



<sup>8</sup> Maj. J. T. Milner, 11th Bn. Station manager; of Western Australia; b. Quirindi, N.S.W., 3 May, 1881.

<sup>9</sup> Maj. N. G. Armstrong, 9th Bn. Bank accountant; of Brisbane; b. Mount Perry, Q'land, 29 July, 1885.

of the 9th, John Leak,<sup>10</sup> jumped out of the trench without orders, ran forward, threw three bombs into the German position, and then jumped into it. There Monteath presently found him, wiping the blood off his bayonet with his felt hat.<sup>11</sup> It was then 12.59 a.m.

This post, which was at the junction of a communication trench leading eastwards to Munster Alley, appeared to have been held by only three German soldiers (whom Leak had killed) supported by two machine-guns which fired from some position slightly beyond. As usual in this fighting, the "strong-point" was merely a deep dugout, the entrance to its stairway being protected with a concrete top, which, as the trench had been destroyed, now stood out as a low mound covered with earth, the trench forming a mere shallow depression around it. During bombardments the German garrison had sheltered in the dugout, and had apparently dragged their dead and wounded into it; when the bombardment ended, the survivors came up and fought from behind the mound. Monteath's men were now about the mound, exposed almost to the waist to any fire which might be turned on them down the shallow depression of the trench ahead. In the confusion of the night it was impossible to obtain any clue as to what was happening even on the immediate right or left. But, looking along this hollow, Monteath could see the Germans in some post ahead, and German flares seemed to be rising not only from that direction but from every side. Pozières Trench up to its junction should have been taken by the first line of the 9th, and most of that sector had in fact been occupied and was being deepened and improved by Captain Lawrance<sup>12</sup> and his men. But enemy flares appeared to be rising from the portion nearest to the O.G. Lines, almost in Monteath's rear. He had now only six or seven men at the mound or "strong-point"; behind them for ten or fifteen yards the trench was empty. Then came the line of men lightly strung out along the trench, forming a chain for the continuous forwarding of grenades. But no grenades were now arriving. As

<sup>10</sup> Pte. J. Leak, V.C. (No. 2053; 9th Bn.). Teamster; of Rockhampton, Q'land; b. Portsmouth, England, 1892.

<sup>11</sup> For his bravery on this occasion Leak was awarded the Victoria Cross.

<sup>12</sup> Capt. S. N. Lawrance, D.S.O.; 9th Bn. Pharmacist; of Ipswich, Q'land; b. London, Eng., 13 Dec., 1881.

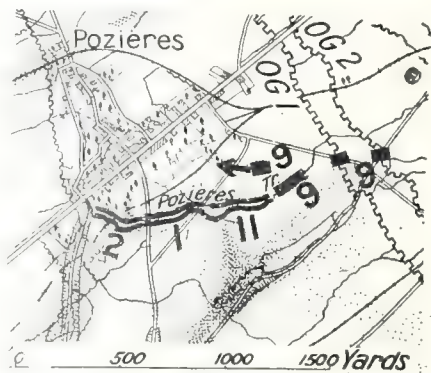


Monteath went back across the empty sector to hasten up the supply, two Germans, apparently driven by the advance of the troops on the left, came running towards it. He shot them; but it was obvious that for holding even what had been gained in the O.G. Lines—the first objective—reinforcements would be required and also more bombs.

Meanwhile Armstrong's party attacking O.G.2 had found that trench entirely destroyed and indistinguishable from the surrounding area, which resembled a choppy sea of bare earthen waves. Machine-gun fire, apparently from some more northerly sector of the O.G. Lines, swept the area. Three attempts to find the trench entirely failed; the difficulty of determining the right direction in the dark in such an area was almost insurmountable, but eventually Armstrong with some of his men returned to O.G.1. Thus, when the time arrived for launching the second stage of the main assault, no progress had been made in O.G.2; in O.G.1 the first objective had been reached, but the position was confused and precarious, and further advance could not be made in order to keep pace with the barrage or with the advance on the left. As the barrage lifted, the Germans to the north along the O.G. Lines, being unattacked, would be free to turn their rifles and machine-guns on to the flank of the line attacking Pozières.

The troops had been carefully instructed that each attacking line was to stop at its proper objective. In the 1st Brigade, to render this order easy of performance, men of the first line wore a white ribbon tied behind the right shoulder, men of the second line a blue ribbon, and those of the third line a green. Near the right of the 3rd Brigade, however, an officer of the 9th, leading part of the second line across Pozières Trench, and shouting to his men in the confusion of the night to "keep on moving," was followed by part of the first wave also. Officer and men appear to have swept straight on until they reached the light railway skirting the back hedges and a narrow projecting plantation, or copse, across which the railway ran. An explosion had been observed in this copse, and men of the 9th, thrusting forward among the shredded trees, found, amid a litter of

ammunition baskets, an abandoned battery of old Belgian 5.9-inch howitzers. They threw bombs into the neighbouring shelters, chalked the name of their battalion on certain of the guns,<sup>13</sup> and in some cases had wandered into the barrage of their own artillery, when the hour arrived for the second lift of the bombardment.

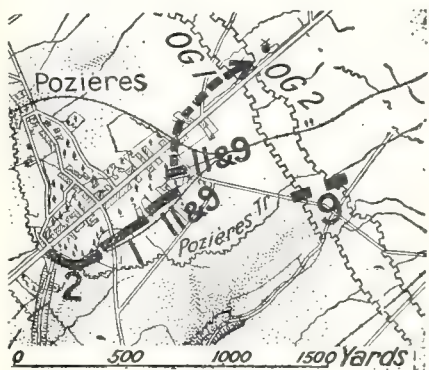


To the waiting infantry of the second line the reduced bombardment which had been falling on the second objective had been by no means easy to distinguish from the barrages on the flanks and in front, or from the German shells which began to burst overhead and in rear a few minutes after the first attack. Machine-gun fire was now coming from the O.G. Lines on the right, and a number of officers and men were hit.<sup>14</sup> As an officer afterwards said: "There was one illumination of bursting shells and flares all round," and the second lift of the barrage, at 1 a.m., was consequently almost impossible to recognise. Officers therefore had to trust almost solely to their watches in giving the orders to advance. The troops quickly struck the railway line, which they crossed, and made for their objective, the back hedges, under the impression that the Germans would be found holding a line of trench there. Along most of the front, however, no defences could be found, the enemy having been prevented by nightly fire from completing this line. On the extreme left the 2nd Battalion eventually discovered a trench among the tree-stumps. The 1st found only a ditch, which manifestly was

<sup>13</sup> Some of these guns appear to have been first captured by the 11th. To the south-west of the village Lieutenant H. H. MacCarthy (of Bothwell, Tas.) of the 4th Battalion and his men captured a 5.9-inch howitzer, and Lieutenant W. L. Cooke of the same battalion a 77-mm. field-gun.

<sup>14</sup> Major W. McK. Young and Lieutenants C. A. Wittkopp and J. H. Lukin of the 9th Battalion, Major J. T. Milner of the 11th, and Captain M. W. MacVean of the 1st seem to have been wounded about this time, and Captain A. C. Mackenzie of the 1st and Lieutenant W. Aggett of the 9th killed. Major F. W. W. Lindeman of the 1st had been mortally wounded earlier. (Young was of Koongal, Q'land; Wittkopp of Kingaroy, Q'land; Lukin of Perth, W. Aust.; MacVean of Coonamble, N.S.W.; Mackenzie of Drummoyne, N.S.W.; Aggett of South Brisbane, Q'land; and Lindeman of Woollahra, N.S.W.).

no defence line, since no equipment had been left there, and went on hunting for a trench. Part of the 11th came upon the old gun-positions in the copse. But a good part of this line of the 3rd Brigade was diverted from its proper task by the sight of about thirty Germans who had been startled by the advance, and who could be seen by the light of shells and flares running back towards the village and the O.G. Lines beyond. To the men of the 11th and 9th who were nearest them, this spectacle was too tempting. The shouts of officers and N.C.O's were unheeded; about 140 men followed the fleeing enemy right through the Australian barrage, which had just lulled in the process of lengthening on to the Bapaume road. The Germans were gradually overtaken in the neighbourhood of the road and shot or bayoneted, and here three



N.C.O's — Company Sergeant-Major Graham<sup>15</sup> and Sergeant Baggs<sup>16</sup> of the 11th, and a sergeant of the 9th—overtook their men hunting in droves and diving for any German who broke cover. They would not yet listen to restraint, but the N.C.O's pushed forward with them, endeavouring to gain control, until they reached the summit near the windmill.<sup>17</sup> At this distance from the main fight it was very dark. There seemed to be no more Germans to chase, and the men grew tired, came to a stop, and for the first time gave ear to their sergeants, who told them they were far beyond their objective and, if they stayed, would be cut off by the enemy. Once stopped, they were easily turned. It remained to find their way back. The lines of the road, a cross hedge, and the railway afforded a safe guide; but the barrage of the Australian field-guns and howitzers was now heavy, and there

<sup>15</sup> Lieut. W. W. Graham, M.C.; 11th Bn. Miner; of Mount Lawley, W. Aust.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 1888.

<sup>16</sup> Sgt. F. H. Baggs (No. 748; 11th Bn.). Labourer; of East Perth, W. Aust.; b. Weymouth, Dorset, Eng., 1890.

<sup>17</sup> C.S.M. Graham afterwards stated that they were "over the hill."



was nothing to do but face it and make the passage in rushes. This was accomplished in spite of loss. Of seven who plunged into a shell-hole with Graham, he alone clambered out, a high-explosive shell having burst in their midst. Nevertheless about 2.15 some ninety of these men returned to the position which they should have occupied, forming a most welcome addition to the scanty line there.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile the time had arrived for the advance of the third line. In the 1st Brigade's sector this was to be furnished by the leading halves of the 3rd and 4th Battalions, and in the 3rd Brigade's by those of the 10th and 12th. The allotted companies of the 3rd and 4th had, in spite of the enemy's precautionary barrage, reached their jumping-off trenches in good time; here, when the first wave attacked, the enemy's answering bombardment fell on them, but more heavily on the reserve companies close behind. German 5.9-inch shells, bursting in the assembly trench of the 3rd Battalion, killed two officers and two company sergeant-majors, and seriously wounded two company commanders, the regimental sergeant-major, and many others. Parts of the third line had by arrangement assembled beside the Chalk Pit road and in a communication trench—both at right angles to the objective—and, before advancing, must consequently carry out several changes of direction, a process difficult under fire by day and almost impossible in the confusion of a night attack. Word had just come back of the capture of the first objective, when, at 1 a.m.—the hour for the attack on the second objective—the third wave scrambled out. At the dividing line between the two brigades a line of telegraph poles led to the village, and the officers had hoped that, if the two inner flanks followed these to the railway and the troops there slightly changed direction, they would be able to attack their objective "square on." But a previous misdirection of part of the 3rd Battalion, and the confusion caused by the shelling and loss of leaders, dispelled all hope of retaining accurate formation. The companies of the 3rd found themselves advancing in small groups, which kept

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<sup>18</sup> Having found no Germans on the hill-crest, these men came back under the impression that they could have "walked to Berlin."



feeling for their left in order to preserve touch. Captain Harris, who commanded this wave of the battalion and himself moved along the line of poles, states:<sup>19</sup>

I found myself alone except for my batman, who, though he was carrying a large bucket of bombs, stuck closely to me, and added a touch of humour to the proceedings by sitting down on his bucket whenever I paused for a moment to get my bearings. . . . We passed over a shallow ditch of linked-up shell-holes—the first objective—which was dotted with little groups of men, some cheering wildly, some singing, and some groaning. We eventually came to the tram line where there was a confused mass of men belonging to different battalions.

The troops had been on the look-out for this railway, most of them being directed to halt there and reorganise—a precaution which saved this stage of the advance from disorder. Officers and N.C.O's hurriedly sorted out their men as far as possible, and at 1.30 moved on to the final objective. Stumbling amid the huge shell-holes, through stunted hedges, broken copses, and enclosures which had once been back gardens, they came upon an open space covered with heaps of bricks and the tumbled framework of roofs, which they knew must be the village. Some of the troops of the second line, finding no trench at their proper objective, had already wandered forward searching for one. These, and some of the third line who had been led forward a little too soon, had found their own barrage falling about them, very sensibly waited in shell-holes for orders, and were presently found by their leaders in precisely the position intended. The main street, though lying immediately beyond the nearest row of ruins, was not at first easily recognised,<sup>20</sup> and here too there was no sign of a trench; but the officers quickly laid out the lines for one winding round the rear of the brick-heaps, and, as the only chance of shelter lay in digging, the men set eagerly to work. The second line of each wave had been loaded at the start with picks and shovels, but in their eagerness to join the fight most of the troops had thrown these away, and they had now to rely upon their

<sup>19</sup> In a monograph written for his battalion during the war.

<sup>20</sup> See *Vol. XII, plates 219-21*. An elderly man of the 2nd Battalion, finding himself lost with a few others, settled in a large shell-hole, lit a fire, and waited for daylight, when he found he was close to the intended line.

entrenching tools, small implements highly inadequate for a heavy task. Fortunately, although flares were still rising from "K" Trench west of the village, from the O.G. Lines to the east, and occasionally from hidden sources beyond the road, enemy fire, both of small arms and artillery, now died down, and the line of troops, feverishly digging with their tiny picks amid the brick-heaps along the final objective of the 1st Brigade, was almost undisturbed. The diminished barrage of their own shells, now bursting a hundred yards beyond the road, afforded some safeguard against counter-attack.



In the area of the 3rd Brigade, however, the assault had at this stage fallen seriously behind the time-table. While the battalions furnishing the third line of the 1st Brigade had been approaching their assembly position by the open road past the Chalk Pit, those of the 3rd Brigade had to continue along the causeway towards Contalmaison, and then file to the left up Black Watch Alley to their jumping-off point. Nearing Contalmaison in a barrage of gas-shell, part of the leading half of the 10th, which, being destined for the extreme right, should have led this column, was forced to put on gas-helmets. These, being of the old "P.H." type, rendered the men almost completely blind. Some wore them only when halted, but others kept them on when moving, missed the opening of the alley, and, on turning back to enter it, became sandwiched between the following companies of the 12th. The leading company commander of the 10th succeeded in collecting his own platoons; but this mishap, and repeated entanglement in telephone wires which spanned the alley, caused such delay that, at the time when both battalions should have been forming up to attack, they were still wedged in the narrow trench, edging slowly forward at snail's pace half-a-mile short of their proper position. At

1.30, when the barrage behind which they should have been advancing was due to be lifted to its final phase, uncovering any Germans in the area which they should have been attacking, they were still being anxiously awaited by the commanders of the 9th and 11th Battalions, which they should have been supporting. Every telephone line to the rear had long since been cut by shell-fire or trampled down; but at 1.35 a messenger from the 3rd Machine Gun Company reached MacLagan's headquarters, and, stumbling down the dark stairway under the foundations of the red-brick ruin past the tired runners into the low chamber, announced to the staff, which for the moment had been able to lay aside its gas-helmets, that at 1 a.m. parts of the 12th and 10th were still entering Black Watch Alley. "Seemed to me all boxed up somehow," he added. Half-an-hour later there arrived from Lieutenant-Colonel Elliott of the 12th the news that these companies were still there. "Hold artillery barrage on third objective," the message ran. "God Almighty!" exclaimed MacLagan. It was then 2 o'clock, and the barrage had lifted at 1.30.

The actual situation, however, was not so serious as it appeared. The companies of the 12th were in charge of two experienced commanders, Vowles and that same Margetts whose experiences on Baby 700, on the day of the Anzac Landing, have been fully narrated in the first volume of this series. Though—like all his company—filled with tense anxiety at the knowledge that he was desperately late, Margetts walked across to the headquarters of the 11th and 12th Battalions in some old gun-positions in Sunken Road Valley<sup>21</sup> slightly to his left front, and asked his colonel for instructions. It was then 1.33. Elliott told him to advance at once. Guided by Captain Kayser, intelligence officer of



<sup>21</sup> See footnote 58 on p. 478.



the battalion, Margetts and Vowles led their companies over the open, crossed Pozières Trench shortly after 2 o'clock, and after reorganising moved on, Margetts on the left, Vowles on the right. Men of the 9th Battalion in Pozières Trench were calling "keep to the right," and three of Vowles' platoons heading in that direction lost touch. The rest presently came upon a line of the 1st and 3rd Brigades digging at some distance beyond the railway. Ahead, amid the ruins of the village, Germans could still be seen running away; the wild rush of part of the second line towards the windmill had indeed long since cleared the whole objective for that part of the third line, and more; and, as the rest of the second line, finding no trench at their own objective, had gone forward searching for one, most of the ground up to the third objective had already been occupied.<sup>22</sup> Both the 9th and 11th had by then lost a large proportion of their officers,<sup>23</sup> but Lieutenants Belford<sup>24</sup> and Hallahan of the 11th, and Le Nay,<sup>25</sup> its Lewis gun officer, had succeeded in getting their men to dig on a line parallel to the main street and barely fifty yards from it, and running through the forward end of the long copse. This practically secured the third objective. To the east some of the 9th under Lieutenant White,<sup>26</sup> the only officer of that battalion who had reached this neighbourhood, were entrenching themselves about fifty yards in advance of the tramway, with a good field of fire commanding the Bapaume road east of the village as far as the O.G. Lines. Here, about 2.15 a.m., Margetts and Vowles with their companies of the 12th found the line, practically on the third objective, and therefore apportioned their force along it with orders to "dig like blazes." The

<sup>22</sup> Among the records of the fight an earth-stained message from Lieutenant E. Rogerson (of Upper Swan, W. Aust.) of the 11th, timed as late as 3.20, runs: "General confusion of units looking for trench in second objective."

<sup>23</sup> In the 11th, in addition to those already mentioned (*p.* 502), Captain A. H. Macfarlane (who had commanded part of the front at Cordonnerie during the German raid on the night of May 30) had been killed with gas-shell in Black Watch Alley early during the bombardment, and Captain F. G. Medcalf (his colleague of the Cordonnerie raid) had been sent up to take his place. Captains F. J. Griffin (of Uddingston, Lanarkshire, Scotland, and Perth, W. Aust.) and H. A. Mansfield (of Perth) had been wounded in the same trench, and Captain G. G. Campbell (of Fremantle, W. Aust.) in taking the second objective. Captain Mansfield died of his wound.

<sup>24</sup> Capt. W. C. Belford, 11th Bn. Schoolmaster; of Edinburgh, Scotland, and Perth, W. Aust.; b. Gordon, Berwickshire, Scotland, 5 Aug., 1887.

<sup>25</sup> Capt. L. L. Le Nay, 11th Bn. Mechanical expert; of Meckering, W. Aust.; b. Bowral, N.S.W., 21 Dec., 1891. Killed in action, 10 Aug., 1918.

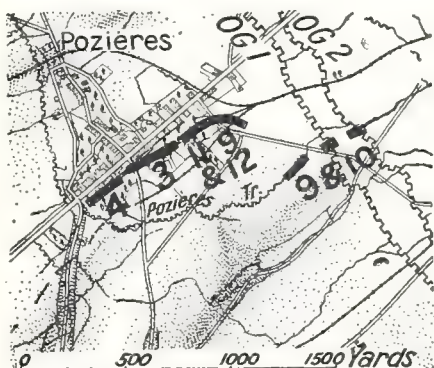
<sup>26</sup> Capt. R. M. White, M.C.; 9th Bn. Accountant; of Brisbane; b. South Brisbane, 6 Aug., 1892.



commander of the right-flank platoon of the 12th, Lieutenant Laing, seeing that this flank was completely open through the failure of the attack on the O.G. Lines, bent back his right from White's position in a curve across the railway, so as to face the open ground stretching to O.G.I, which trench lay 300 yards distant on the right. Observing figures moving through the dark in his rear, Laing sent out and discovered that they were the three platoons of his company which had swerved away to the right. He accordingly set them to extend this flank in a curve southwards.

Thus by 2.30 along the whole length of the village a front line was being dug parallel and close to the Bapaume road, but bent back at the eastern end short of O.G.I. On the left the companies composing it<sup>27</sup> at once reported themselves in touch with each other, and patrols sent out by Captain Harris of the 3rd in the left centre immediately connected with them. On Harris's right there was at first a gap, but his patrols found the 11th Battalion digging in the copse, and, before the arrival of two platoons for which he sent to fill the space, it had already been bridged by the 3rd Brigade.<sup>28</sup> The line was thus complete as far as the curved eastern flank, and the troops were digging with all their might to entrench themselves before day-break. At certain points in the several objectives engineers and pioneers were, according to plan, constructing strong-points and also communication trenches to connect with saps already driven forward from Black Watch Alley and other parts of the old line.

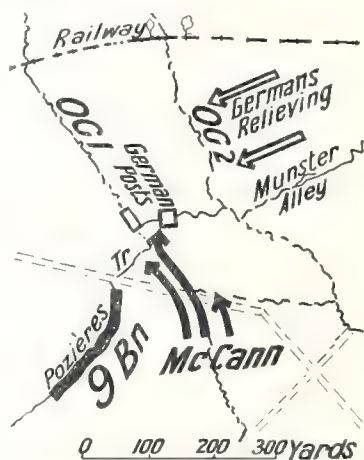
The objectives in Pozières had thus been taken without much resistance from the enemy. But in the O.G. Lines and



<sup>27</sup> Under Captain H. C. Pearce (of Yass, N.S.W.) and Lieutenant H. H. MacCarthy of the 4th.

<sup>28</sup> It was filled by the party which had been chasing Germans, and by part of the 12th.

their immediate neighbourhood the attack had been much more stubbornly opposed. At 1.30 the leading company of the 10th Battalion under Captain McCann<sup>29</sup> had arrived at the headquarters of the 9th in O.G.1, and had at once been sent on by Colonel Robertson to relieve Monteath. The head of this company had reached about the point in O.G.1 from which the attack originally started, when it was met by a back-rush of the front post of the 9th. This was the result of a counter-attack by the enemy in the O.G. Lines, who happened, during this night, to be reinforced by two relieving companies. McCann ordered his two subalterns<sup>30</sup> to place their platoons in shell-holes to right and left of the trench respectively, and, putting himself at the head of a central party in the trench, gave the order to advance. Little opposition was met until, near the junction of Pozières Trench, progress was stopped by barbed-wire in the trench and by heavy machine-gun fire from some nest of the enemy close on the right front. The platoon which had been advancing on that side of O.G.1 had not reached this point,



but McCann, recognising that the enemy post must be seized, lined out in front of it in shell-holes the ten or twelve men who were with him. With bombs, they thoroughly subdued the German bombers and smashed one machine-gun.<sup>31</sup> When bombs began to run out, McCann passed the word to charge

<sup>29</sup> Lieut.-Col. W. F. J. McCann, D.S.O., M.C.; 10th Bn. School teacher; of Malvern, S. Aust.; b. Glanville, S. Aust., 19 April, 1892. (McCann's company had reached the north-eastern end of Black Watch Alley at 12.30 a.m., but had to wait for the arrival of 10th Battalion H.Q., which then ordered him to report to the 9th.)

<sup>30</sup> Lieutenants A. R. Walker (of Mt. Gambier, S. Aust.) on the right, and A. C. Sandland (of Jamestown, S. Aust.) on the left. A third subaltern, Lieutenant H. W. Thomas (of Goodwood, S. Aust.) had been wounded in Black Watch Alley. Walker was killed next month at Mouquet Farm; Sandland was mortally wounded this night.

<sup>31</sup> McCann's success in this bold movement was partly due to his having with him two old Gallipoli sergeants, G. D. Beames (of Eastwood, S. Aust.) and J. C. Wickham (of Parkside, S. Aust.). He attributed his eventual failure (1) to bombs being sent up without detonators; (2) to the failure of Australians farther back in O.G.1 to keep touch with his party.

with the bayonet, and he was on the point of giving the word when he was hit in the head by a machine-gun bullet. Lieutenant Ruddle,<sup>32</sup> the adjutant of the 9th, who had gone forward to assist in the supply of bombs, was shot dead while peering over the parapet. The supply failed and the South Australians were driven back down O.G.1, which they barricaded 120 yards short of the junction with Pozières Trench. Just as day was breaking, McCann, though his skull had been fractured, managed to report to Colonel Robertson that the fighting of the last hour-and-a-half had left things as they were.

At that hour a reserve company of the 10th under Major Giles—not that which should have followed McCann's, but one which should have advanced immediately west of the O.G. Lines—arrived in O.G.1 by way of Black Watch Alley.<sup>33</sup> At Colonel Robertson's request Giles sent fifty of his men under Lieutenant Blackburn,<sup>34</sup> together with two teams of the battalion bombers, to carry on the fight. Blackburn found at the barricade the remnants of McCann's company, almost exhausted by the fatigue of throwing. The Germans were close ahead. Blackburn, with a few bombers supported by men of his own company, leapt over the barricade and rushed to the next traverse. After tearing down the barricade—since the supports were exposed in crossing it—they rushed bay after bay, in each case after a heavy discharge of bombs. German machine-guns in O.G.2 swept the surface, and snipers in Munster Alley as well as in the trench ahead picked off men who were exposed. After 100 yards the trench became almost indistinguishable in the crater-field, and the Australians, crawling to avoid the fire of a machine-gun, could bomb only with difficulty, though the enemy in a crater thirty yards in front threw continuously. Calling a halt here, Blackburn with four men crept ahead to locate the gun. In exposing themselves to do so, all four men were killed, but

<sup>32</sup> Lieut. C. H. Ruddle, 9th Bn. School teacher; of Bundaberg, Q'land; b. Suva, Fiji, 8 Feb., 1886. Killed in action, 23 July, 1916.

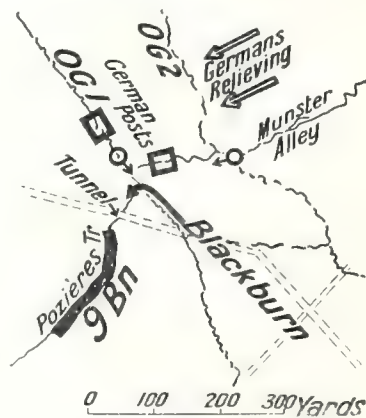
<sup>33</sup> It had previously been lying under a bombardment largely of gas-shell on the causeway from Casualty Corner to Contalmaison. The two companies of the 10th which should have been immediately ahead of it seem to have missed their way, and to have wandered in the dark on a semicircular course in the Sunken Road Valley (the depression north of Black Watch Alley).

<sup>34</sup> Capt. A. S. Blackburn, V.C.; 10th Bn. Solicitor; of Adelaide; b. Woodville, S. Aust., 25 Nov., 1892.

a German strong-post was observed in a cross-trench only a stone's throw to the right—evidently the same which had baffled previous parties. Returning to Colonel Robertson, Blackburn arranged for trench-mortars to bombard it, and then attempted a second rush. But the machine-gun, unsilenced, hit four men as they started. Robertson arranged that artillery as well as mortars should support the next attempt, in which, using a second team of bombers, Blackburn gained another thirty yards.

The German resistance now stiffened. Blackburn, crawling forward with Sergeant Inwood,<sup>35</sup> his right-hand man through-out, found that it came from the cross-trench which seemed to cut O.G.I at right angles. In a fourth attack he captured the part west of O.G.I, but during consolidation he found that the junction with O.G.I was being rendered impassable by enemy machine-guns in Munster Alley and the German post, which killed Inwood and cut off Blackburn's own party. Searching for another avenue, he crawled west along his trench. It ended in a broken-down tunnel: beyond this were men, and to his delight he ascertained by shouts that they were Captain Chambers's company of the 9th. He was, in fact, in the eastern end of Pozières Trench, and the tunnel was merely its crossing under the Pozières-Bazentin road. A passage was quickly opened through which Chambers sent men and tools, and the pioneers soon opened a safe line of communication.

Meanwhile, although enemy bombing had increased, Colonel Robertson ordered another advance. Blackburn accordingly

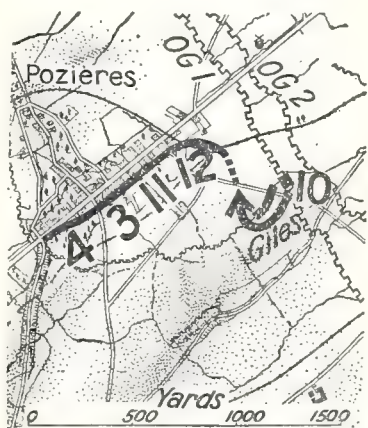


<sup>35</sup> Sgt. R. M. Inwood (No. 1533; 10th Bn.). Clerk; of Railway Town, Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Renmark, S. Aust., 1895. Killed in action, 24 July, 1916. [Inwood had previously distinguished himself at Armentières. An extract from the 10th Battalion war-diary of 19 May, 1916, reads: "At 2000 (i.e., 8 p.m.) the enemy suddenly opened up a heavy shell attack on our billets in the vicinity of Rouge de Bout. . . . During the first bombardment—when seven men were wounded on the road—No. 1533 Sgt. Inwood and 168 Cpl. Hamilton, at great personal risk, ran to the assistance of the wounded men and carried them to shelter. . . ." Inwood was a brother of Cpl. R. R. Inwood, who was awarded the Victoria Cross after the Battle of the Menin Road, 20 Sept., 1917. Hamilton belonged to Semaphore, S. Aust.]



made his fifth, sixth, and seventh attempts, but each time deadly fire stopped the advance over the exposed ground. Blackburn wriggled forward into the next bay only to find a machine-gun peering through the traverse at its farther end. Robertson, however, arranged for howitzers to support an eighth effort; Captain Olding, the artillery observer, directed the fire, but reported that the howitzers were too old and unreliable for such close shooting—some shells fell in the Australian trench. The enemy was little affected, and, when the infantry advanced, at once shot down the leading men.

Blackburn was then ordered to hold on where he was. His persistence had saved the situation in the O.G. Lines,<sup>36</sup> and, of his 70 N.C.O.'s and men,<sup>37</sup> about 40 had been killed or wounded. Shortly after noon Major Giles relieved them by a platoon under Lieutenant Partridge<sup>38</sup> which, by throwing bombs, kept the enemy at a distance, while O.G.1 was rendered defensible and the pioneers cut through to Pozières Trench, now held by part of the 9th under its sole remaining company commander, Captain Chambers. That evening Partridge's platoon, worn out with continual throwing, and having lost 26 of its 35 men, was relieved by part of the other wing of the 10th originally allotted for the advance up the O.G. Lines. Giles withdrew his tired men and led them to their proper area, covering the gap between the thrown-back flank of the 12th and the 9th in Pozières Trench.



The attack up the O.G. Lines and also that immediately west of them had thus stopped 600 yards short of the

<sup>36</sup> For his gallantry on this occasion Blackburn was awarded the Victoria Cross.

<sup>37</sup> These consisted of 34 men under Sergeant F. J. Scott, 20 under Sergeant C. R. McLaren (who was sniped through the throat), and two teams of bombers. Both Scott and McLaren belonged to Gawler, S. Aust.

<sup>38</sup> Capt. H. E. Partridge, 10th Bn. District clerk and engineer; of Kingscote, S. Aust.; b. Wisanger, Kangaroo Island, S. Aust., 22 Nov., 1885.

objective. But the gap of 500 yards between Blackburn's position and the nearest of the Australians in the village, to whom this narrative must now return, had been covered by the turned-back flank. Pozières was indeed, by day-break, very strong. The soil, having been pounded with shells, was soft, and the trench fringing the main street was now four feet in depth, with support trenches and strong-posts in certain parts and communication trenches partly completed. Several Vickers machine-guns were in the front line; and, since Lewis guns were now boldly allotted to the front lines of attack, sixteen or more of these weapons had reached the objective with the first troops, constituting a tremendously powerful defence against counter-attack. Day broke, however, without any sign of an enemy counter-stroke. Sniping shots began to come from the now visible ruins across the road, and from one point on the right south of it, and, stung by the killing of mates beside them, small parties of Australians—some specially detached, others "prospecting" on their own account for adventure and "souvenirs"—made their way among the dry heaps of rubble on both sides of the road. The artillery of both sides was by this time almost silent, the gunners being tired and the respective staffs as yet uncertain where their own or the opposing infantry were situated. The adventurers could therefore wander through the ruins without fear of shell-fire, searching for the openings of cellars and dugouts where the snipers were suspected to be hiding, and rolling into them phosphorus bombs. These filled the underground chambers with smoke and set fire to them, forcing the occupants to come out. A proportion of these chambers proved to contain Germans, and throughout the village could be seen isolated Australians "ratting" occasional fugitives from the rubble heaps, chasing terrified and shrieking Germans and killing them with the bayonet, or shooting from the shoulder at those who got away, and then sitting down on the door-steps to smoke and wait for others to bolt from the cellars. Occasionally parties of prisoners, in some cases numbering nearly a score, were brought in by two or three men. This grim sport—for so in the fury of

war it was regarded—was not without great risk to the hunters.<sup>39</sup> While it was in progress there emerged, on the eastern side of Pozzières, the first serious counter-attack. About daylight Germans had been seen moving at that end of the village and near the stump of the windmill. An officer of the 12th, Lieutenant Brine,<sup>40</sup> who had gone forward to search for a lost patrol, had not returned.<sup>41</sup> About 5.30 a.m. several hundred Germans suddenly issued from the O.G. Lines south of the Bapaume road and from the open space east of the village, and in a single file, widely extended, made their way south-westward across the railway, passing the flank thrown back by Lieutenant Laing, and heading directly

<sup>39</sup> The eastern end of the village became especially dangerous. Lieutenant White of the 9th, whose men at dawn were being hit by snipers firing from behind a red-brick ruin, twice sent out small patrols of a sergeant and three or four men, the first of which killed three snipers and bombed a few cellars, and the second, about 9.30 a.m., moved along the main road, throwing bombs into cellars until it had collected eighteen prisoners. White was afterwards forced to prevent men from going out, as many were shot.

The 11th and 12th east of the copse were constantly troubled by sniping at fifty yards' range from a cross-road south of the main street. C.S.M. Graham (the N.C.O. who had brought his men back from the windmill the night before) said to his officers: "I'll go across and see if I can find the beggars—give us a bomb or two." He found a shaft leading to a deep dugout, and threw a bomb down the staircase. It exploded on a landing and he at once followed it, and from the landing threw his remaining bomb into the chamber below. Before it exploded someone at the foot of the stairs fired twice with an automatic revolver, the first bullet piercing Graham's gas-mask and the second the back of his neck. His men, however, were occupied upon the enemy's first counter-attack, which happened to be advancing at that moment. As soon as it had been beaten off, Sergeant R. L. Richardson returned to the dugout, and its inmates, who had been subdued by Graham's second bomb, surrendered, seventeen in all, including five officers, some of them medical. (This dugout is shown as No. 1 in the marginal sketch.)

Several hours later, at the mouth of another dugout, which had been visited earlier by a single Australian, there was seen a German waving a white handkerchief. Signs were made to him to come in; after a long pause he came forward with both hands above his head, followed by eleven others, including two neatly-dressed medical officers, both of whom wore gloves and one an eye-glass. The senior said, in English, "Well, this is a blessing!" and all showed their relief by offering cigarettes and souvenirs to their captors and endeavouring to shake hands. [This dugout was probably, but not certainly, the headquarters of the III/62nd I.R. (see p. 524), shown as No. 2 in the marginal sketch.]

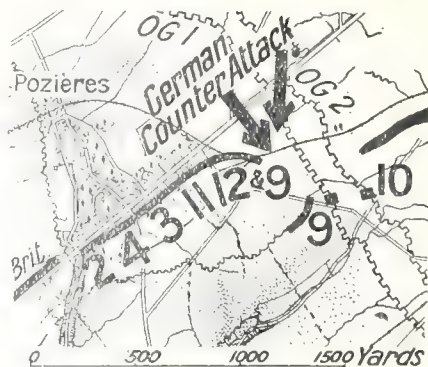
<sup>40</sup> Lieut. A. T. Brine, 12th Bn. Builder and contractor; of Claremont, W. Aust.: b. Sale, Vic., 13 April, 1891.

<sup>41</sup> Months afterwards Brine was heard of as a prisoner-of-war in Germany.





into the gap between it and the post in the O.G. Lines. This counter-stroke had no chance of success, the Australian infantry being ready and not shaken by any shell-fire. Seeing the line of the 3rd Brigade, the Germans opened fire, but the rifles of the 9th, 11th, and 12th, and a Lewis gun on the flank



caused a number to fall, and the attacking line almost immediately sank into shell-holes.<sup>42</sup> Five minutes later it rose again and, under heavy fire, made back for cover across the Bapaume road and thence round the north-eastern end of the village, where the back-hedges partly screened it from view. Almost the whole Australian line, however, observed the movement, and at 6.25 a.m. the fire of the artillery was called down upon that part of Pozieres. The Germans sheltered in a series of covered artillery-dugouts beyond the hedge, and for the time being no more was seen of them. The "ratting" of Pozieres was resumed, hampered, however, at the south-western end by sharp sniping from "K" Trench just outside the western outskirts, and by the Australian shells which were still bursting over that part of the ruins. At this stage, the front line having been in some places dug in to a depth of seven feet, its garrison was reorganised, most



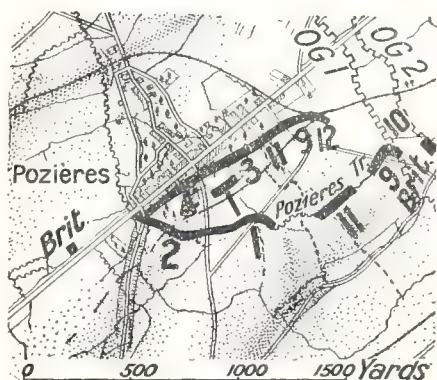
of the battalion commanders<sup>43</sup> personally walking round their line and in some cases thinning the garrison, which was now being sorted by the front-line officers into its proper units,

<sup>42</sup> This was the first general counter-attack at Pozieres, made by the III Battalion, 157th Regiment (see pp. 523 and 524).

<sup>43</sup> It is recorded that Elliott (12th), Howell-Price (3rd), Heane (1st), Mackay (4th), and Stevens (2nd) were all engaged in this work.



and sending surplus troops to the rear. At the end of this process the front was held from right to left as follows: in O.G. 1 and 2—parts of the 9th and 10th Battalions; then a gap to the south-eastern outskirts of the village, covered, however, by the 9th Battalion in Pozières Trench and the refused right flank of the 12th; south-east of Pozières, the front-line companies of the 12th under Captains Vowles and Margetts; front-line companies of the 11th under Captain Medcalf; front-line companies of the 3rd under Captain Harris; on the left flank, the front-line companies of the 4th and a portion of the 2nd. As for the supports, except on the left no trench existed at the second objective; consequently most of the supporting troops were in the first objective (Pozières Trench) or in the original



“jumping-off” trenches. In certain parts, however, support trenches were afterwards dug, 150 yards behind the front line.<sup>44</sup> The 5th and 13th Field Companies of engineers from the 2nd and 4th Divisions respectively were sent forward to assist the engineers and pioneers of the 1st Division in digging communication trenches and other works.<sup>45</sup>

The German shell-fire did not as yet fall on the front-line troops, but an ugly barrage still lay upon Casualty Corner, Contalmaison causeway, and Chalk Pit road. Its full force had throughout the night descended on the headquarters of the 1st Brigade in its miserable niche north of the Chalk Pit. All telephone lines of that brigade, including five separate wires to the headquarters of one battalion, had been cut

<sup>44</sup> Where the plan of attack had succeeded, there resulted a wide separation of the two halves of those battalions which attacked the third objective, there being interposed between them in each case the whole of the battalion which had taken the first and second objectives. In the case of the 3rd and 12th this was subsequently rectified by the commanders of front-line battalions obtaining permission to bring forward their reserve companies, part of the supporting battalion being then sent back.

<sup>45</sup> The communication trenches, which were dug with great rapidity, are shown on map No. 8. The engineers had with them some working parties of the 6th Battalion. Lieutenant J. W. Forbes (of Melbourne and North Sydney) of that battalion, himself wounded, carried on the work of an engineer officer who had been hit.

before the attack, and the staff had to rely mainly upon runners,<sup>46</sup> who went incessantly through the barrage with their messages. Part of the 2nd Brigade had now been moved up to Contalmaison causeway, and parties from that brigade<sup>47</sup> were carrying food, water, and ammunition through the barrage almost without interruption. Such of the wounded as could walk had to make their own way to the aid-posts, and were thence directed to the field tram-line in Sausage Gully, which led them to a dressing station in Albert. The seriously wounded were collected by the battalion stretcher-bearers and brought to the regimental aid-posts, carried thence by bearers of the 2nd Field Ambulance and some of the 3rd down Chalk Pit road to Casualty Corner, and from there by bearers of other ambulances to Sausage Gully, from the head of which horse-ambulances took them to a dressing station at the still almost-intact château in Bécourt Wood.<sup>48</sup> Men in the front lines, themselves intact, could see much of this work proceeding amid the shell-bursts a quarter of a mile in rear.

The Australian soldier was thus, at last, encountering the dreaded barrages of the Somme, and, as at all other stages of the war, from the first moment of this new experience he adopted his own independent standard of conduct. He judged, by what he saw, that all except the heaviest barrages could be passed with a reasonable chance of survival, provided that he did not hesitate, and it became a matter of pride that, if he was carrying food or ammunition to his mates waiting for them in the firing line, his burden must be delivered, barrages notwithstanding. Having resolved that this shell-fire must be faced, he went through it characteristically, erect,

<sup>46</sup> One artillery line was, however, maintained—in fairly continuous use—to the headquarters of the 2nd Battalion, where Lieutenant W. Graham (of Perth, W. Aust.) of the 2nd A.F.A. Brigade was stationed as observing officer. For three days—until July 25th—two artillerymen, Gunners F. P. Greet (of Hawthorn, Vic.) and A. J. Mudd (of East Maitland, N.S.W.), living out in shell-holes in the bombarded area, continued to repair this line. At 1st Brigade Headquarters during the night of July 22-23 Lieutenant F. U. J. Tinkler (of Sydney) and his linesmen had continued to repair their wires until 8.25 a.m., by which time all available wire had been used, and repairs were abandoned. Pigeons and lamp-signalling were also used.

<sup>47</sup> The 7th Battalion lay behind the causeway as reserves for the fighting. The carrying parties were provided by the 6th.

<sup>48</sup> From Bécourt the seriously wounded were sent by the motors of the field ambulances to Warloy-Baillon, whence they were despatched by motor-ambulance convoy to the casualty clearing stations at the railheads. The less severely wounded at Bécourt were despatched by returning motor-lorries to the terminus of the field tramway near Albert, where the other "walking" wounded were picked up and all light cases taken to the corps collecting-station at Vadencourt. Thence they were sent either to casualty-clearing stations or—when it was established—to the Corps Rest Station, which was formed largely for the reception of cases of shock and overstrain.

with careless easy gait, as if the scream and burst of the projectiles were utterly unnoticed, in many cases too proud to bend or even turn his head, because his mates were looking on. The stretcher-bearers—who were moved by an inward desire to show to the combatant troops that they shared the worst dangers—and the runners drew on themselves the special admiration of their mates; but the average Australian troops were always ready to accept a risk if the object seemed worth achieving. "Give it a go"<sup>49</sup> expressed their attitude in facing many a dangerous project. From this standard they never varied throughout the Pozières fighting, the example being set by the troops themselves quite as much as by their officers. As a veteran major said on that battlefield: "I have to walk about as if I liked it; what else can you do when your men teach you to?"

It was by reason of these qualities that, by noon on the first day of the Pozières battle, the front-line troops had received water, food, rifle-ammunition, and bombs. Dumps of munitions had been formed in the communication trenches and at other convenient points in rear. All the Australian objectives, except in the O.G. Lines, had been well consolidated, and a strange silence had fallen on the village. In some of the front trenches the exhausted men, having worked through the night, were allowed to rest.

Huddled up in strange and contorted attitudes in the trench (writes Captain Harris), or stretched out in shell-holes in the rear, they slept as soundly in all the discomfort and danger as if they had been in feather beds.

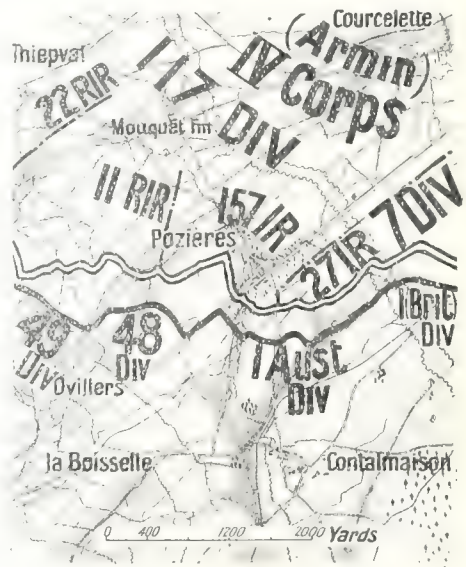
To gain range for a farther advance, the 2nd Brigade of Australian Field Artillery brought up its batteries and emplaced them about a mile behind their infantry, just hidden from the enemy by the curve of the ground towards the head of Sausage Gully.

The German side of the narrative may now be told. The Pozières area, like the rest of the German front north of the Somme, had at the beginning of the Somme battle formed part of the area of the XIV Reserve Army Corps (Lieutenant-General von Stein), of the Second German Army (General Fritz von Below.) In consequence of the immense numerical growth of this army, its front was on July 19 subdivided, the northern part, including Pozières, being allotted

<sup>49</sup> That is, "Give it a try," or "Have a shot at it." The happy-go-lucky attitude of the Australian in action is illustrated by an incident which occurred in the trench rushed by the 2nd Battalion at Pozières. One of the men picked up a water-bottle containing hot coffee. "Don't drink it," shouted another, "it's poisoned!" "Well, here's luck!" answered the finder, as he gulped it down.



to the First Army (to which von Below was transferred) and the southern part to the Second Army (now commanded by General von Gallwitz, brought from Verdun). A similar development had taken place in the XIV Reserve Corps, which, when swollen by reinforcing divisions, became known as the "Group Stein." The IV Army Corps (Lieutenant-General von Armin), brought down from the north, took over the sector between Pozières and Ginchy, and expanded into the "Group Armin." The westernmost division in von Armin's group was a composite one, known as "Burkhardt's Division," which almost from the beginning of the battle had been fighting for Ovillers. Major-General Burkhardt was the commander of the 10th Bavarian Division, but his present force included regiments hurriedly rushed forward from three different divisions, only one of them being his own.<sup>50</sup> When Ovillers was lost, these overstrained troops fell back on the newly-adjusted front from Pozières to Thiepval. At this stage the drawing of the British line round Pozières, the frequent British reconnaissances, and the incessant bombardment of the village pointed (as the German official history states) "to the inference that the next British major-attack would be directed on Pozières . . . An early strengthening of the garrison of this important sector became increasingly urgent if the commanding position of this ruined village was not to be lost." Accordingly the 117th Infantry Division<sup>51</sup> (a Silesian formation, brought down from Ypres) began on the night of July 20 to relieve Burkhardt's tired troops; the 157th I.R. taking over "K" Trench and the adjoining 1,000 yards of Third Avenue (the "Schwarzwaldgraben")<sup>52</sup> and the 11th and 22nd R.I.R. the extensions of that trench towards Thiepval, facing the 48th and 49th British Divisions. South of the Bapaume road the defence of Pozières had lain entirely in



<sup>50</sup> The 10th Bavarian Division, which had been holding part of the second German line on July 1, had been immediately dismembered, its regiments being rushed to several points of danger. Thus the 16th Bavarian I.R. had been detached to Longueval, where it lost 2,631 officers and men; the 6th Bavarian R.I.R. despatched to Hardecourt, near the junction of the French and British line, lost 1,809; and the 8th Bavarian R.I.R., which had been holding Ovillers, 1,183. This last was the only one of his regiments which the commander of the 10th Bavarian Division still controlled, his other infantry being the 180th I.R. (26th Reserve Division—Württembergers), 15th R.I.R. (2nd Guard Reserve Division), and 185th and part of 186th Infantry Regiments (185th Division).

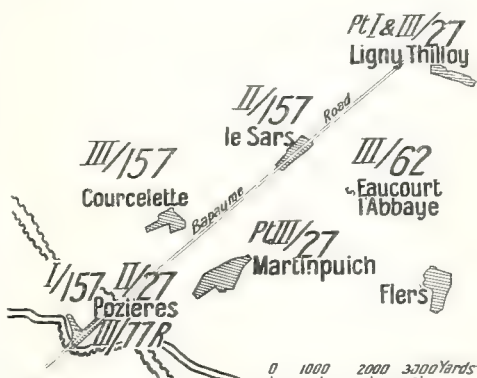
<sup>51</sup> Commanded by General Kuntze.

<sup>52</sup> "Black Forest Trench." This faced the right of the 48th Division. The front posts of the 157th were at this time in "Second Avenue" and in the almost demolished trenches known to the Germans as "Kabel" and "Röder" Trenches; from the latter, just north of the Bapaume road, a German patrol was driven by the 2nd Australian Battalion before the fight.



the hands of the 7th Division,<sup>53</sup> upon whose 27th Infantry Regiment this task had fallen ever since July 13. Its troops having been heavily tried, parts of other regiments had been lent for their relief. In order further to assist them, and to transfer to a single authority the responsibility for defending the south-west corner of Pozières, against which the British attacks had mostly come, the 117th Division was ordered to extend its flank so as to take over Pozières Trench as far east as the Pozières-Contalmaison road. This was accomplished on the night of July 21 by the I/157th I.R.,<sup>54</sup> which already held "K" Trench and part of the Schwarzwaldgraben, and which now put in its 4th company south of the road. The battalion which it relieved—the tired II/27th<sup>55</sup> (by then reduced to some 150 rifles)—was withdrawn to switches (afterwards known as "Centre Way" and "Tom's Cut") north of the village.

Thus it was that on the night of July 22 Pozières was defended on its western and south-western sides by the comparatively fresh troops of the I/157th I.R. (117th Division), and on its south-eastern side—including the southern end of the O.G. Lines—by the tired troops of the III/77th R.I.R., one of the battalions lent to the 27th I.R. (7th Division). The III/77th R.I.R. was to be relieved during that night by the III/62nd (7th Division). Through difficulties of relief the companies in this part were to some extent mixed.<sup>56</sup> There were also in the forward area twenty light machine-guns of the 2nd company of the II Musketeer Battalion,<sup>57</sup> and some machine-guns of the 91st R.I.R. (2nd Guard Reserve Division); and in the rear areas of the battlefield were arriving the advanced troops of the IX Reserve Corps (from near Lens), which was shortly to relieve the IV Corps in the Pozières-Ginchy sector. The local reserves were disposed as shown in the marginal sketch.<sup>58</sup>



<sup>53</sup> Troops from Prussian Saxony; commanded by Lieutenant-General Riedel.

<sup>54</sup> The 157th I.R. was commanded by Major Hengstenberg, and its I Battalion by Major Zech, killed on 6 Dec., 1916.

<sup>55</sup> That is—II Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment. The reader is reminded that the battalions of a German regiment are here indicated by Roman numerals, I, II, III, and companies by Arabic, 1 to 12. It will further assist him if he bears in mind that the 1, 2, 3, and 4 companies constituted the I Battalion; 5, 6, 7, and 8 the II Battalion; and 9, 10, 11, and 12 the III Battalion. I.R. and R.I.R. mean "Infantry Regiment" and "Reserve Infantry Regiment" respectively, but I.R. will, where convenient, be dropped, and reserve regiments be indicated by an "R" after the numeral.

<sup>56</sup> For example, 30 men of II/27, with two machine-guns of that regiment, were still between the 10th and 11th companies of the 77th. At noon on July 21 the order of companies (from west to east) had been: in Pozières Trench—5/27, 6/27, 10/77 R., 11/77 R.; O.G. Lines—7 and 8/27, 9/77 R.; farther east—12/77 R., 3/27, 7/77 R. At the time of the attack, early on July 23, it was: in Pozières Trench—10/77 R., part of 6/27, 11/77 R.; in O.G. Lines—9/77 R.; east of O.G. Lines—12/77 R., 3/27, 9/27 (here also 9 and 12/62 were coming up to relieve III/77 R.).

<sup>57</sup> These units had been newly formed. Each musketeer battalion comprised two companies, and each company three platoons (each of 40 men with 10 guns). One platoon of this company was east of Pozières cemetery, and another west of it.

<sup>58</sup> III/157 in Courcellette was the reserve of the 117th Division; II/157 in Le Sars, reserve of the Group Armin; a few elements of the 10th Bavarian and 2nd Guard Reserve Divisions were still in the area.

The communications of the German garrison in the Pozières sector, like those of the British and Australians facing them, ran, not direct to the rear, but almost parallel to, and close behind, the front. Thus, although the 157th Regiment's front line faced chiefly the II British Corps (48th Division), its supporting battalion at Courcellette would have to pass across the fronts of the III British and I Anzac Corps before they could reach the front; its support positions, in the O.G. Lines and their communication trenches north of the Bapaume road, were opposite the front of the I Anzac Corps. It followed that any reinforcements sent up in the heat of battle would have to pass through areas much more heavily shelled than those which they would have crossed if approaching directly from the rear. The areas behind the German line were liable to tremendous and well-directed bombardments; those in rear of the British were much less dangerous.

The attack on Pozières had been daily expected, the IV German Corps noting that the village had been under bombardment for weeks. By this shell-fire the garrison, though frequently relieved, had been subjected to fearful trial. Among the records is a translation of a letter written by a German in Pozières to his wife:

In Hell's trenches,

23/7/16.

Dear Luise and children,

My darlings, the gods only know if I am writing for the last time. We have now been two days in the front trenches. It is not a trench, but a little ditch, shattered with shells, with not the slightest cover and no protection. We've made a hole, and there we sit day and night. . . . We<sup>59</sup> have already lost about 50 men in two days, 6 killed, the others wounded. We get nothing to eat or drink, and life is almost unendurable. Up to now I have only had a bottle of selzer. Here I have given up hope of life. . . . To my last moment I will think of you. There is really no possibility that we shall see each other again. Should I fall—then farewell. . . .<sup>60</sup>

Information of the impending attack had also been received more directly from captured soldiers,<sup>61</sup> who had told the Germans that a great attack would take place at 3.15 a.m. on July 24th. The Chief-of-Staff of the Group Armin was of opinion that the prisoners had mistaken the date, and that the attack would be delivered on July 23rd between 1 and 2 a.m., and, as a precaution, orders were given to the German artillery to lay down bursts of shell-fire on the area from which the attack was expected to come. On the night of July 22nd the commander of the I/157th wrote to the III/157th in Courcellette: "According to the regiment's information Pozières will be stormed in the next few hours." The battalion staffs were comparatively safe in their deep dugouts, but the bombardment entirely severed their connection with units on either flank and to the rear. The staffs were, therefore, utterly befogged as to what was occurring, and were surprised both by the swiftness of the assault, after only two minutes' bombardment, and by the rapidity with which, when a trench was captured, a host of machine-guns were established in it.<sup>62</sup> The higher staffs in rear received only vague information of

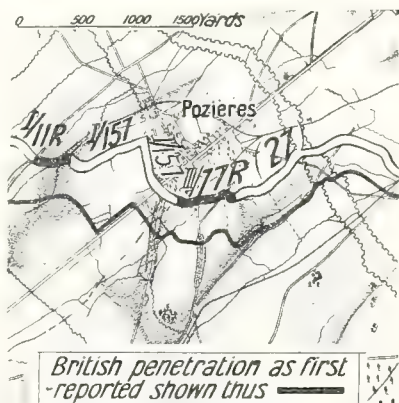
<sup>59</sup> "We" probably means his company.

<sup>60</sup> The writer of this letter appears to have been afterwards taken prisoner.

<sup>61</sup> This was stated by Germans at the time, and has since been confirmed. The information did not come from a member of the A.I.F.—no Australian soldier was captured until the attack had been launched.

<sup>62</sup> "No sooner is a trench taken," observed the commander of the II/27th, who was among the prisoners, "than a good barrage of machine-guns is laid down in front of it."

what had occurred,<sup>63</sup> and the banishment of their aeroplanes robbed them of the best means of ascertaining the position after daylight. Thus the staff of Burkhardt's Division, before handing over control at 9 a.m. to that of the 233rd Brigade, merely reported that Pozières and the Schwarzwaldgraben had been strongly attacked: the Pozières defences had been penetrated, but the III/157th had been sent forward from Courcellette to counter-attack (the II/157th being despatched by the army group to Courcellette to take its place) and had probably restored all ground in that area; the 11th R.I.R. was reported to have retaken the Schwarzwaldgraben, which the British had attacked at the point where the flank of the 11th joined the 157th. The incoming 233rd Brigade staff, however, found the position very different: the British, in spite of counter-attack, were still clinging to the Schwarzwaldgraben, and had consolidated their position there "on a two-platoon frontage," the 11th R.I.R. having no more reserves at hand with which to strike; at Pozières the 1st Australian Division,<sup>64</sup> which had penetrated the southern defences of the village at the junction of the 27th and 157th Regiments, were still in possession, the early morning counter-attack by the III/157th, summoned from Courcellette, having failed<sup>65</sup>—how completely, seems to have been not yet known.



The German official account is (possibly through absence of data) too inaccurate to deserve full quotation,<sup>66</sup> but makes it clear that the body of Germans in Pozières Trench who were overrun and killed or captured by the 1st Battalion were the survivors of the 10th company, 77th R.I.R., including its commander and three other officers. The others, who were seen running near The Cope and were followed by part of the 3rd Brigade, were evidently a remnant of the same company and the twenty men of the 6th company of the 27th, who

<sup>63</sup> The history of the 157th I.R., based on the German official records, for example states that the British barrage lasted until 2 a.m., and "thereupon followed a very strong enemy attack (Australian)."

<sup>64</sup> The presence of this division was now known, an officer of the 12th Battalion and twelve men having been captured (see p. 515). The Germans also captured an order from which they learnt for the first time that the 4th Division was in France. A German "intelligence summary" states that this probably consists of "the 4th Brigade of the 1st (sic) Australian Division, and two young brigades. The majority of the troops are, therefore, quite inexperienced in fighting of the French theatre of war. It would therefore be remarkable if this division, as such, were put into the line."

<sup>65</sup> This was the attack described on p. 516. See also p. 524.

<sup>66</sup> It states, for example, that the 1st and 2nd companies of the 157th were driven out of their positions in Kabel and Röder Trenches, west of Pozières (i.e., bordering the north of the main road) by "the New South Wales Battalion," and—after the Australians had been twice counter-attacked and thrown out—were compelled to fall back on the main Schwarzwaldgraben. As a matter of fact, Röder Trench (the only one taken by Australians) appears to have been easily seized by a patrol of the 2nd Battalion. The taking of Pozières Trench south-west of the village is attributed to "the Victorian Battalion." The German account also states that each Australian division included an extra brigade—of New Zealanders!



with their two machine-guns fell back on the O.G. Lines. The 11th company of the 77th R. also fell back on the O.G. Lines and, with the 9/77th R. and the 9 and 12/62nd (which were coming up to carry out a normal relief) was responsible for the German counter-attacks that prevented the progress of the 9th and 10th Australian Battalions up the O.G. Lines. The most powerful counter-attack, which, it is claimed, for a short time drove the Australians back past their old lines, was undertaken by men of both German regiments organised by Oberleutnant Ohr of the 62nd. It was presently beaten back, Ohr himself being killed.

The commander of the III/62nd, who was to relieve the III/77th R. had early in the afternoon gone forward to the latter's headquarters in Pozières—just south of the main road near The Copse<sup>67</sup> to arrange the relief. The commanders and staffs of three battalions—II/27th (Captain Lyons), III/77th R. (Major von Lettow-Vorbeck), and III/62nd (Captain Brück)—were in this dugout when the fighting started; but practically nothing was known of the battle's progress until a runner, who had been sent to bring up the medical officer of the 62nd, said that he had seen several of the enemy in front of the headquarters dugout. The three staffs clambered upstairs to defend the dugout; flares were thrown, and, surely enough, a line of Australians was seen digging-in little more than thirty yards away. A few shots were fired at them, but these drew stronger rifle-fire, the adjutant of the 27th being wounded. Major von Lettow-Vorbeck and Captain Lyons therefore withdrew their staffs through the barrage to the nearest switch trench,<sup>68</sup> north-east of the village. The commander and staff of the III/62nd, who stayed, were afterwards captured.

At 1.30 a.m. the commander of the 157th (Major Hengstenberg) in Courcellette had heard that the line round Pozières had been broken. After informing his divisions and the artillery, he had ordered the III/157th (at Courcellette) to recapture the lost ground<sup>69</sup>—the II/157th was already on its way to Courcellette to take that battalion's place. Captain Lyons of the II/27th in "Centre Way" helped to organise the counter-attack, and joined it with one of his composite companies, himself advancing with the second wave. When it was shattered,<sup>70</sup> Lyons and the broken companies took shelter in the north-eastern outskirts of Pozières.

Unhappily the British offensive of July 23rd had, as a whole, met with no success comparable to that of July 14th. On the extreme right the attack by part of the XIII Corps upon Guillemont at 3.40 a.m., after partly succeeding, was

<sup>67</sup> See sketch on p. 515.

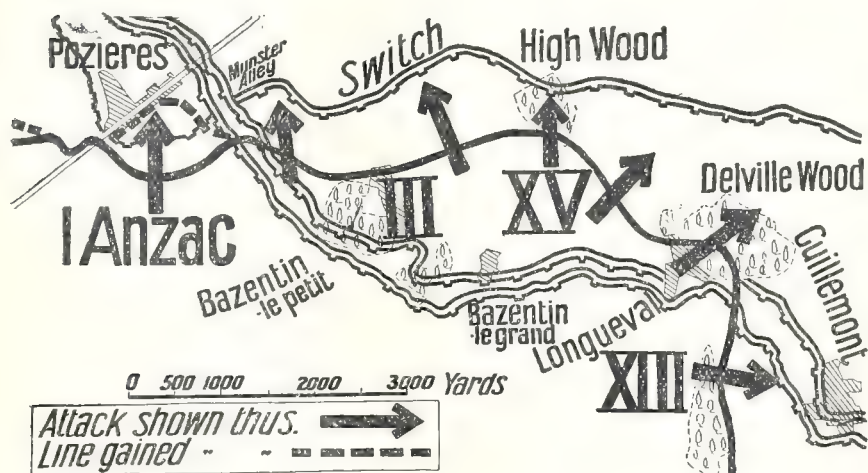
<sup>68</sup> Centre Way.

<sup>69</sup> Its 9th company, however, was held back at Courcellette to guard the batteries there; the counter-attack was made by the 10th, 11th, and 12th companies and one of the II/27th.

<sup>70</sup> It did not even achieve the slight success claimed in the German official history, unless this represents the interruption for a short while of the "prospecting" of the village by individual Australians.

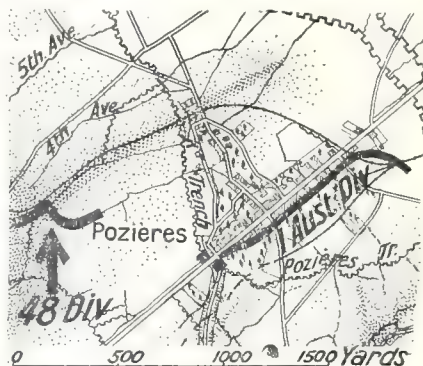


driven back. On the front from Delville Wood to Pozzières the rest of the XIII Corps, and the whole attacking force of the XV and III, advancing after a final bombardment lasting for six and a half hours, secured no permanent gain of ground. On the front of the XV Corps one of the finest Scottish divisions, the 51st, was unable to clear High Wood,



with the result that troops attacking to right and left were driven back. In the III Corps, nearer Pozzières, the 19th Division was met by the fire of Germans recently ensconced in shell-holes and new trenches far in advance of the Switch Line—the line upon which the bombardment had been directed; and the assaulting battalions of the 1st British Division, attacking the western end of the Switch and Munster Alley, immediately east of the O.G. Lines, had to pass through a barrage before assembling, and subsequently, while creeping forward to assault, were seen by the enemy in the light of his flares. Heavy machine-gun fire was opened, and the leading companies of the 2nd Royal Sussex, attacking Munster Alley, lost all their officers but one, and 109 men. The effort failed, and the supports were not put in. Part of the King's Royal Rifles seized a section of Switch Trench, but were bombed out, losing their colonel and 225 others.

Thus on the whole front east of Pozières no inch of ground was gained. West of it, however, the nearest brigade of the 48th Division<sup>71</sup> had succeeded in capturing a small section of "Second" and "Third" Avenues, the two southernmost of the series of long German communication trenches in which, as has been previously stated, the enemy front between his first and second systems then lay. Third Avenue more to the west had been assaulted by the 6th Gloucester (of the left brigade of the 48th),<sup>72</sup> but the battalion had been



caught by machine-guns and repulsed with heavy loss; and, on the extreme left flank of the offensive, the 49th Division was driven back after an initial advance in the "Leipzig Salient" of the old German front-line system. But where the 48th had penetrated it held on. In an endeavour to extend that hold to the left, where the 6th Gloucester had failed, the Bucks Battalion at 7 a.m. renewed the attack, but was driven into the trench already captured. On the right the foothold was gradually enlarged, but it was found that, between the 48th Division and the left of the Australians, bodies of Germans were present in strength and fought stubbornly. For connection with the 1st Australian Division, the 48th had to rely on its posts in the trench along the northern edge of the Bapaume road.

The total result of this—the third—great British attack on the Somme was, therefore, that one of the two buttresses<sup>73</sup> of the enemy's northern flank on the battlefield had been broken, but the powerful effort had failed everywhere else. The failure strongly impressed the Commander-in-Chief. It was mainly due to the care and cleverness with which the Germans had occupied in advance of their main line new positions which had escaped bombardment; and it seemed to show that, reinforced as they had been, they could afford the

<sup>71</sup> The 145th Brigade.

<sup>72</sup> The 144th Brigade.

<sup>73</sup> Pozières and Thiepval.

time and the troops to create a strong and fairly elaborate defence, supported by powerful reserves, which could no longer be broken through by sudden strokes such as those of July 1st and 14th. It even seemed possible that they might undertake a strong counter-offensive.

The attempt to break through the German front on the Somme before the enemy's full reserves could be summoned had therefore definitely failed; but Haig was not the type of commander to think of breaking off the struggle. The notion of transferring—in certain events—the main effort to another part of the British front had, it is true, not been entirely discarded: Haig was already considering a future thrust in Flanders in possible association with the navy. But such an operation would take long to prepare,<sup>74</sup> and, without some such alternative attack in immediate prospect, the abandonment of the Somme offensive was inconceivable. The increasing strength of the Allies in men, guns, and munitions had now given them the initiative; they could not afford to hand back to the German staff the opportunity of renewing at Verdun or elsewhere the pressure on France, which was at last being relieved. French public opinion rightly expected from Britain an immense effort in assistance. Moreover to the British people—who assumed from *communiqués* and other reports that the battle had been a constant progress towards eventual success, and who were pouring out for it men and material to an extent hitherto unapproached in the history of their nation—the abandonment of the offensive would have caused a bitter shock and disillusionment. It is true that to men and women of British race such shocks are usually the most powerful stimulants to more determined action, and that the best and simplest course is probably to keep the nation constantly informed, within the limits of military prudence, of the whole truth. But only if no prospect of success remained, or if a better prospect were attainable elsewhere, could it have been worth while so rudely to shatter the rising spirits of the nation and army, and Haig fully believed that success was gradually being attained on the Somme. The situation which had now arisen had been

<sup>74</sup> On July 22 Haig's C.G.S. wrote to Gen. Hunter-Weston, whose corps, the VIII, was being transferred from the Somme to the north: "Until the time for a move on the north comes, whether in co-operation with success down here (as we hope) or as a result of a decision to close down here (for which there are no grounds at present) you will be able to get your divisions made up gradually . . . and give them a comparative rest."

considered before ever the Somme offensive was launched,<sup>75</sup> and he had decided that, even if the effort failed in its primary object, it would be worth continuing for a secondary one—that of wearing down the enemy. The “wearing-down battle,” or *bataille d’usure*, is a method well known to military science;<sup>76</sup> operations have often been undertaken with the object of wearing down armies and even nations; and the later instances differ from the earlier mainly in the extent and thoroughness of the effort, and especially of its application by means of blockade, air-raids, and propaganda to the whole civil population of the opponents, previously protected by the provisions of that structure of international law which Germany, at the outbreak of war, threw down. This process—in ordinary life known as “seeing who can last the longest”<sup>77</sup>—involves, when applied in a great war, such loss and destruction as may well cause even hard-driven leaders to shudder at the prospect of adopting it as the only way to victory.

If they so adopt it, their success will of course depend upon whether they can wear down their enemy at a faster rate—at least proportionately to their strength—than that of the wastage of their own army or people. At this stage in the First Battle of the Somme the Allies possessed the advantage in killing, having greater strength, especially in guns and ammunition and in the air; and a continuous calculation by Haig’s intelligence staff of the German losses—as indicated both by the published casualty lists and by the withdrawal of exhausted divisions—placed the German loss considerably higher than the British. It was apparently assumed that the German commanders, like the British, would not finally withdraw a division until it had suffered at least 4,000 to 5,000 casualties. Provided that these calculations

<sup>75</sup> See note on p. 237, and also *Sir Douglas Haig’s Command, 1915-1918*, by Dewar and Boraston, pp. 94-96 and elsewhere.

<sup>76</sup> The Battle of Verdun is the example best known to laymen. Both the offensive and its methods were originally devised with the primary object of wearing down the enemy, the strategical object being secondary. The intention was afterwards changed and, when the attack was delivered, the primary object was to pierce the French front. This failed, but the original object was in a large measure attained, a loss of 400,000 being inflicted on the French at the cost of 250,000 to the Germans.

<sup>77</sup> A whole war waged on this principle is a “war of attrition.” This was the object of the policy known as that of “killing Germans,” already referred to in *Vol. II*, p. 778. As was natural, leaders for the most part fell back upon this policy only when their strategic efforts failed.



were approximately correct, the continuance of the battle would help ultimately to reduce the German Army, both in numbers and morale, to a point at which a break-through might again become possible. Moreover Haig had not fallen back on the wearing-out battle as the *sole* means for success. There had been invented in England a new and secret instrument of attack, with which his army would soon be provided, and the arrival of which might give him another means of breaking the enemy's line. He was determined to return to the policy of wide offensives when his position was more favourable.<sup>78</sup>

In the meantime, however, at 6.15 a.m. on July 23rd<sup>79</sup> he changed the whole policy of the battle by an instruction to his army and corps commanders that, instead of renewing the general attack, they must now make local assaults upon such points as each corps required for the favourable launching of the next wide offensive, and thus maintain constant pressure on the enemy, while allowing men, ammunition, and other means of attack to accumulate in the reserve area.

The new policy was to be immediately initiated. The XIII Corps would attack Delville Wood; the XV Corps, the strong-points at the east and west corners of High Wood; the III Corps, Munster Alley and part of Switch Trench adjoining. The XIII Corps were also ordered to capture Falfemont Farm and Guillemont, arranging with the XX French Corps the date and time for that operation. The several corps at once began to draw up their separate plans. Haig, however, required them to co-operate as far as was possible without initiating important offensives which would

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<sup>78</sup> A few days later Haig's determination to continue the battle had to be defended against the anxious questionings of the British Government, reported to him in a letter of July 29 from Robertson. "The powers that be," it said, "are beginning to get a little uneasy . . . The casualties are mounting up, and Ministers are wondering whether we are likely to get a proper return for them. . . . They will persist in asking me whether I think a loss of, say, 300,000 men will lead to really great results, because, if not, we ought to be content with something less than what we now are doing, and they constantly inquire why we are fighting and the French are not. . . ." Robertson tried to allay this anxiety at a Cabinet meeting on August 1, and Haig wrote to him: "Any weakening of purpose now would certainly have a deplorable effect on our Allies' trust in us, on the general faith in our power to achieve victory, and even on the confidence of our own army."

<sup>79</sup> The Commander-in-Chief at this hour conferred with Rawlinson.

call for large drafts on his reserves. According to the diary of the III Corps, he called at noon at its headquarters at Montigny

and emphasised the necessity of close *liaison* between us and the 1st Australian Division, and the importance of having fresh British troops in the neighbourhood of Munster Alley and of seizing point X.5.B.4.1 (the junction of Munster Alley with O.G.2).

As the Australians and III Corps were to work together, a conference was held the same afternoon at the III Corps Headquarters between Haig's chief-of-staff (General Kiggell), General Gough (Reserve Army), the commander of the III Corps, and General White, representing the I Anzac Corps, which, from noon onwards, had been made responsible for the sector occupied by the 1st Australian Division. At this conference the next step in the O.G. Lines was agreed upon—the storming of those lines as far as the road, not by continuing the endeavour to bomb up them, but by a frontal attack by the Australians south-east of Pozzières. The III Corps either simultaneously or later would assault Munster Alley, the operations being undertaken, if possible, that night. The 1st Australian Division also intended to capture immediately the remainder of Pozzières village, north of the Bapaume road.



Meanwhile the Australian infantry, unaware of the high decisions of which during the next six weeks they were to bear the main results, were filled with the consciousness that they had at last achieved a victory of importance on the Western Front. The famous British division on their right flank<sup>80</sup> sent them a message saying that it was proud to fight beside them. On the afternoon of July 23rd, with the German barrage still falling well in rear of them, and with some of their front trenches dug, like those of Gallipoli, a

<sup>80</sup> The 1st Division.

good eight feet in depth, they ate their rations, donned German helmets "ratted" from accessible cellars, chaffed one another or "swopped yarns" of their experiences in the village, congratulating themselves that success had thus far been cheaply and easily achieved, though well aware that the job was not yet finished and harsher experiences were possibly to come. To take the place of officers who had been lost there had been sent up to the units a number of those left behind at Albert during the first attack, who, with the restlessness of schoolboys wondering why they have been left out of a cricket match, had been plaguing the divisional staff with endless inquiries as to whether they had yet been sent for by their units, and with appeals for permission to rejoin.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE TAKING OF POZIÈRES (II)—GERMAN BOMBARDMENT BEGINS

GENERAL Walker, whose objective had so far included only the part of Pozières lying south of the main road, drew up in conjunction with Colonel Blamey, now his chief of staff, an operation order for the immediate capture of the rest of the village by a regular attack preceded by barrage. For this purpose the 3rd Brigade was strengthened by a battalion—the 7th—of the 2nd Brigade, still in reserve; and the 1st Brigade by the 8th Battalion. The troops were to advance in extended formation through Pozières at 4 p.m. From an early hour, however, General Gough of the Reserve Army suspected—probably from reports of artillery observers<sup>1</sup>—that the Germans had entirely abandoned the place. The day was at times cloudy, and the contact airman, who at dawn had flown boldly low down over the village, seems to have been unable to furnish a definite report;<sup>2</sup> but the artillery of the X Corps was asked to keep a sharp watch upon Pozières,<sup>3</sup> it being explained that, if the supposition of its abandonment was correct, the 1st Australian Division would be ordered to push through the village, and the 48th Division to meet it near the cemetery, just beyond the north-western outskirts. At midday an airman,<sup>4</sup> making a long careful reconnaissance, located the Australian front line with fair accuracy,<sup>5</sup> and reported:

The whole of the village of Pozières north of the Road appeared deserted . . . all trenches in Pozières village were empty.

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<sup>1</sup> Observers of the 48th Division had reported Germans running away near the windmill and others withdrawing northwards from the village. The Australian heavy artillery reported that their own infantry were marching through Pozières.

<sup>2</sup> The flying corps reported that it had seen no flares; but, when this aeroplane came over, green flares were certainly lit in some of the front trenches though probably not along the whole front. There was, however, no doubt as to the position of the Australian front line, the reports from the infantry being numerous and accurate.

<sup>3</sup> Major J. W. Povah, of the 25th Divisional Artillery (X Corps), went round part of the Australian front line during the morning, as did Major H. C. Harrison of the 71st Siege Battery (III Corps).

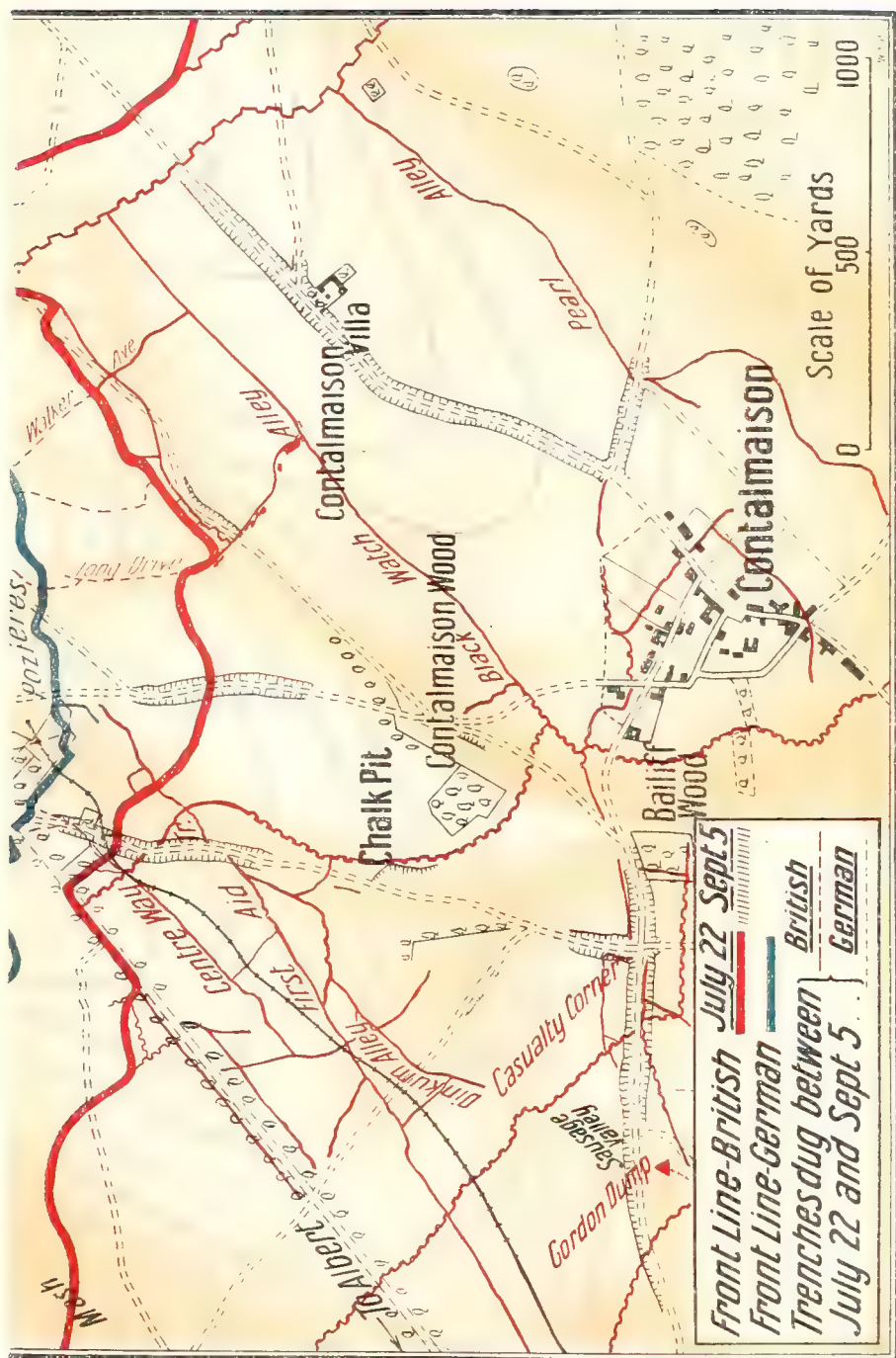
<sup>4</sup> Apparently of the 4th Squadron, R.F.C., which constantly carried out its patrols in a most daring manner during this fighting.

<sup>5</sup> He placed it, however, 300 yards too far forward in O.G.I.





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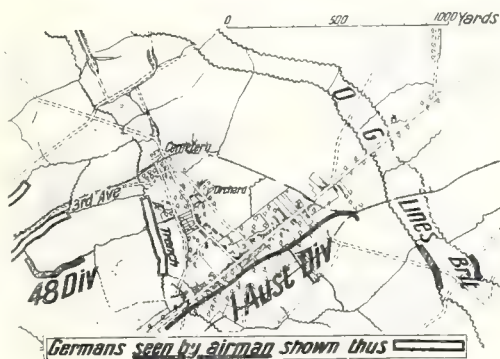


THE BATTLEFIELD OF POZIÈRES AND MOUQUET FARM, JULY-SEPTEMBER 1916, SHOWING THE TOTAL ADVANCE OF THE I ANZAC CORPS





On the other hand he saw Germans close beside the western border of the village, holding 500 yards of "K" Trench ("intense rifle fire," he reported, "was going on near this trench"), and also along part of Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben) near the point where the 48th Division had seized it.



This report convinced Gough that Pozieres was empty and that the Australian infantry had only to send forward patrols in order to complete its capture. He therefore issued orders that the artillery should cease firing so that patrols might enter the village and, if they met with no opposition, hold it; "K" Trench was to be bombarded by the heavies until 5 o'clock, when the 48th and the 1st Australian Divisions were to push forward from their respective positions, and endeavour to join each other on the north-western outskirts of the village. Walker, therefore, with some reluctance, first postponed, and shortly afterwards abandoned, his plan of a formal advance.<sup>6</sup> He immediately informed both the front line brigades of the airmen's reports, and ordered them to push forward patrols to reconnoitre and occupy the village in the manner suggested by the army commander.

This order reached the brigade headquarters about 3 o'clock. From that point all messages had to be carried by men running for the most part over the open. About mid-day the German artillery had shortened range so as to include in its barrage the northern end of the Chalk Pit road,<sup>7</sup> where, slightly sunken between banks, it entered the south-western corner of the village. For the first time part of the front

<sup>6</sup> Walker, however, had already somewhat changed his plan by giving General MacLagan permission to advance the 3rd Brigade as opportunity offered, and by withdrawing from it the assistance of the 7th Battalion.

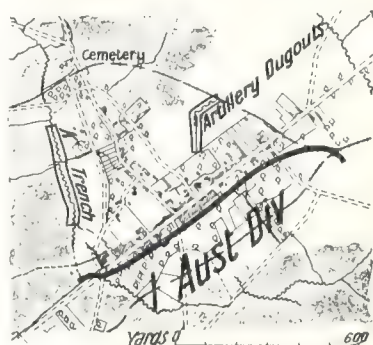
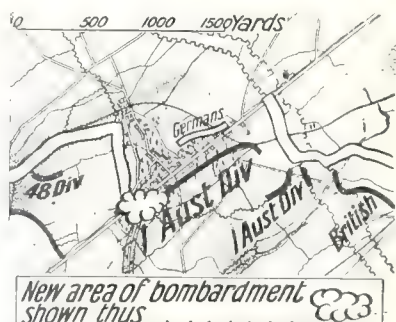
<sup>7</sup> Sometimes called Dead Man's Road.

line—its extreme left—was under bombardment. The 2nd Field Company digging a strong-point there in the open withdrew its men into the trenches for two hours; a sergeant of the 4th<sup>8</sup> notes in his diary:

Sitting down under heavy H.E. shellfire inactive is . . . very nerve shattering.

Through this bombardment the message containing the airman's report and the consequent orders reached most of the battalions about

4 or 4.30. To some of the front-line infantry, who throughout the day had been sniped at by parties of Germans still hidden in Pozières, it was rather exasperating to be informed that the place was empty. It is true that the snipers who had caused a number of deaths in the early morning had mostly been silenced. Near the eastern end of the village a private of the 11th "prospecting" by himself had brought in five prisoners singlehanded, and Corporal Lyon,<sup>9</sup> after a similar excursion, seven. Lyon had also observed a number of Germans in the artillery dugouts beyond the northern hedge and was convinced that, if the place were visited, a much larger haul could be secured. His officers, however, decided to defer the attempt, at any rate until after dusk. In the western sector a patrol of the 3rd Battalion, going out early through the barrage, had accounted for several snipers, and another patrol later brought in nine prisoners. The chief nests of the enemy were in "K" Trench and in the artillery dugouts; from the latter, Germans were constantly endeavouring to

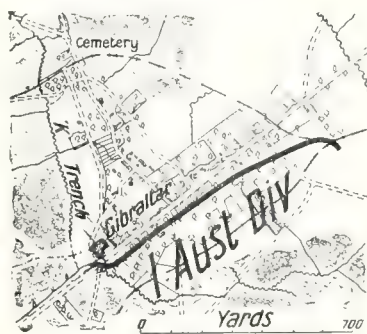


<sup>8</sup> Sgt. A. L. de Vine.

<sup>9</sup> Cpl. A. F. Lyon (No. 1372; 11th Bn.). Miner; of Northam, W. Aust.; b. Northam, 4 Sept., 1886. Killed in action, 23 July, 1916.

withdraw, and a Lewis gunner of the 3rd Battalion, climbing upon the ruins of a house so as to overlook the ground north of the village, shot down a number as they ran.

On the extreme left an attempt had been made to secure one important point north of the main road. Here, as day broke, Captain Herrod of the 2nd Battalion had perceived a white structure ten feet in height, standing some 150 yards beyond the road on the western edge of the village. One of his officers, Lieutenant Waterhouse,<sup>10</sup> observed a German entering the place. As the light increased, it was seen to be a defence-work of reinforced concrete with a low, square block tower at its western end. From its side the barrel of a machine-gun protruded. Patrols were already searching beyond the road, but, as this place looked especially dangerous, Herrod ordered Waterhouse and ten men to make their way round to its far side and rush it while he himself with Corporal Campbell<sup>11</sup> and a few men engaged it from the front. This plan succeeded. The place was found to be occupied by three officers and twenty-three men, with three machine-guns mounted. A German sergeant had his thumbs on the buttons of one gun when the Australians reached him. All the occupants surrendered.<sup>12</sup>



It was found that the concrete covered the entrance to a large cellar, from which a stairway led down to a second and deeper chamber. Apparently, the place had been used as an observation-post—two range-finders and a large number of Zeiss field-glasses<sup>13</sup> were found there, besides four machine-guns, two kettle-drums, a number of revolvers, helmets, telephones, and other military gear.<sup>14</sup> Being reinforced with

<sup>10</sup> Lieut. W. L. Waterhouse, M.C.; 2nd Bn. University demonstrator; of Chatswood, N.S.W.; b. Maitland, N.S.W., 31 Aug., 1887.

<sup>11</sup> Lieut. D. T. Campbell, M.C.; 2nd Bn. Commercial traveller; of West Wallsend, N.S.W.; b. Newcastle, N.S.W., 9 Dec., 1893.

<sup>12</sup> One German officer had been shot through the abdomen and afterwards died.

<sup>13</sup> According to one account, eighteen pairs.

<sup>14</sup> The prisoners, who belonged to the 157th Infantry Regiment and had only lately come into the line, knew that Australians were opposed to them. They said that they had learnt this from the Australian infantry, who had shouted across at them, apparently from their new trenches in the village.

a steel grid,<sup>15</sup> the concrete tower was exceedingly strong, and continued to stand practically undamaged after every trace of the house itself had been utterly blown away.<sup>16</sup> The Australians named it "Gibraltar";<sup>17</sup> but the British barrage still fell too close to permit of its being safely held. Waterhouse therefore brought back the prisoners and machine-guns to the headquarters of his battalion, which at that time was a log structure in the small wood beside the Chalk Pit road.<sup>18</sup>

Gibraltar, now empty, stood only fifty yards east of the southern end of "K" Trench. During the afternoon Germans had been seen creeping up that trench, apparently trying to regain the dugout. They had been fired on and driven off. The commanders of the 2nd and 4th Battalions holding that part of the line—Lieutenant-Colonels Stevens and Iven Mackay—had both asked that the range of the guns be lengthened,<sup>19</sup> and this request had also been signalled to an aeroplane at 8 a.m. Many soldiers along the front were of opinion that most of the Germans had withdrawn at a very early hour, and, had the artillery range been lengthened then, the village could have been easily occupied. It was fairly evident, however, that some of the positions had been reinforced or reoccupied during the morning by the German force sent forward to counter-attack and possibly by others.<sup>20</sup> Gough's orders did not reach the last of the batteries till about 3.30 p.m., and it was at least 5 o'clock before the battalions, acting as the order reached them, began to send out their patrols.<sup>21</sup> The commander of the 1st Brigade had

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<sup>15</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 232. The tower can be seen in plate 40 of this volume.

<sup>16</sup> It still stands beside the road to Pozières, just at the south-west entrance of the village.

<sup>17</sup> During the first week of the Australian occupation, however, it was generally known as "The Cement House."

<sup>18</sup> This structure was not nearly as strong as "Gibraltar," being merely a look-out covered with heavy logs. Beneath it was a large cellar. In the first attack seven Germans had been found here.

<sup>19</sup> One gun had been throwing its shells very short, and it was several hours before this could be corrected. It was by a burst of shrapnel from his own side that Lieut. MacCarthy (see note 13 on p. 502, and note 27, p. 509) was killed.

<sup>20</sup> At 2.30 p.m. a number of Germans were seen coming over the horizon half-a-mile north of the village (see p. 547 text and note 46).

<sup>21</sup> This happened to be the intended hour for a second German counter-attack that was to have been delivered by parts of the 157th and 27th Infantry Regiments after a preparatory bombardment lasting from 3 to 5 p.m. (see p. 547). However, the counter-attack was countermanded at the last moment.



received the 8th Battalion as a reinforcement and decided to use it in taking the village, but in the meanwhile he ordered the 2nd Battalion to seize Gibraltar. The scouts and bombing platoon of that battalion accordingly crossed the road and entered the southern end of "K" Trench,<sup>22</sup> which was found to be much broken down, but in general four feet in depth. In that sector it contained no deep dugouts, the only shelter being small boarded niches. Of the wire-entanglement on its western side, only the stakes remained. Lieutenant Trott<sup>23</sup> and his bombers made their way up the trench driving out a small German patrol. The scouts were spread out beyond Gibraltar, and at about 6.15 p.m. Major Mather<sup>24</sup> of the engineers<sup>25</sup> and Colonel Stevens fixed the line for a trench incorporating that strong-point in the Australian position. The Germans, sniping from a short eastern "tributary" of "K" Trench not far ahead, severely wounded Mather; but part of the 2nd Field Company and two companies of the 2nd Battalion were strung out along the intended line and dug in, a platoon of the 4th Battalion being brought up to guard the left by occupying a short sap on the western side of "K," while the bombers blocked the main trench.

The right of the new position was bent back and joined that of the 4th and 3rd Battalions along the road. From the 3rd a patrol had been sent out and returned with the report that the Germans were strongly holding the artillery dugouts beyond the northern hedge-line. These battalions received no orders to take action, nor were the front-line companies

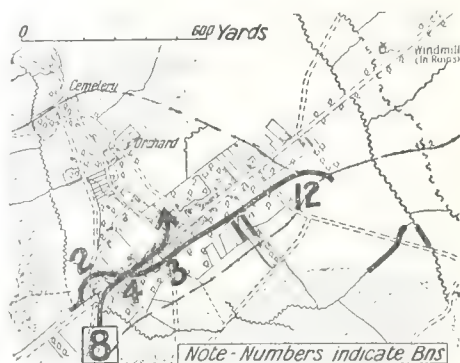
<sup>22</sup> An incident that occurred at this juncture deserves to be recorded. Colonels Stevens and Mackay had left their headquarters and walked forward up Dead Man's Road (the sunken end of the Chalk Pit road) to its junction with the main road for the purpose of making hurried plans for the advance of their men, and instructing the company commanders. As they stood at this desolate corner (the most actively shelled in Pozzières), surrounded by shredded tree-trunks and the dead, a panting messenger stumbled up to them with an envelope marked "Urgent and secret." They hurriedly tore it open. The message read: "A number of cases have lately occurred of men failing to salute the army commander when passing in his car, in spite of the fact that the car carries his flag upon the bonnet. This practice must cease." The sending of this message at such a time was of course a mistake of either the divisional or the brigade staff.

<sup>23</sup> Capt. W. A. Trott, M.C.; 2nd Bn. Railway clerk; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Newtown, N.S.W., 17 May, 1894.

<sup>24</sup> Lieut.-Col. L. F. S. Mather, D.S.O.; R.A.E. C.R.E., 5th Aust. Div., 1918; of Melbourne; b. Melbourne, 30 June, 1888. Died 23 Jan., 1919.

<sup>25</sup> Captain G. Drake Brockman (of Guildford, W. Aust.), Lieutenant J. E. G. Stevenson (of Brisbane), and Corporal P. G. Green (of Coleraine, Vic.) and others of the 2nd Field Company were with this party.

of the 3rd, holding south of the road, along the centre of the village, informed that an advance was to be made by the 8th. Several false alarms of enemy attacks had been raised through the firing of enemy flares in front, and, as a consequence, the tired men were standing to arms when a number of indistinct figures were seen passing across the front not fifty yards away. It was with the utmost difficulty that the men were restrained from firing at them. An N.C.O. of the 3rd bravely walked forward and ascertained that they were a company of the 8th about to commence a northward advance. That battalion had, at 7 o'clock, been directed by General Smyth<sup>26</sup> to send forward two companies to push through the existing front and form a new line of strong-posts across the northern extension of the village.<sup>27</sup> About 11 p.m. its companies had moved into Pozières, marching in single file up the main road from the south-west, until their head was immediately in advance of the front trench held by the 3rd. Here the whole line was to turn to the left and sweep northwards through the ruins. Their commanders, Captains Traill and James,<sup>28</sup> had received no maps, and the orders first given to them when summoned to their battalion headquarters were "to go as far as they could." Traill urged that this was



dangerously vague, and was eventually instructed to form a line 300 yards north of the main road. Leading their men in the dark to the western end of Pozières, the company commanders were able to recognise the main road by fallen remains of the roofs on either side. The village was absolutely

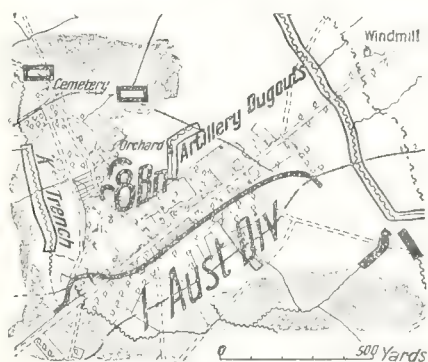
<sup>26</sup> Maj.-Gen. Sir Nevill M. Smyth, V.C., K.C.B. Commanded 2nd Aust. Div., 1917/18; 59th British Div., 1918/19. Officer of British Regular Army; of Marazion, Cornwall, Eng.; b. Westminster, London, 14 Aug., 1868.

<sup>27</sup> A third company was to remain on the main road in support. The fourth, which had been carrying supplies to the line all day, was in reserve.

<sup>28</sup> Capt. G. E. James, 8th Bn. School teacher; of Ballarat East and Mount Rowan, Vic.; b. Ballarat East, 22 Dec., 1890. Died of wounds, 24 July, 1916.

quiet, hardly a flare rising as the platoons assembled along the highway, and, after fixing bayonets, climbed over the heaps of rubble representing the old dwellings<sup>29</sup> and past the church of which one remnant, the chancel window, was still standing. Not a German was seen. Almost on the outer edge of the ruins the right company stopped with its left flank near an orchard at the northern outskirts, and its right bent back towards the front of the 3rd on the Bapaume road.<sup>30</sup> The left company, under Traill, went on to the neighbourhood of the cemetery beyond the northern extremity of the village; but, recognising that he was ahead of his objective, Traill withdrew his men to a line some distance north of the church.

The main northern extension of the village had thus been occupied without opposition, although afterwards a number of Germans were observed in shell-holes a few hundred yards north-east, between the village and the O.G. Lines, and a wild outbreak of enemy fire came from that direction.<sup>31</sup> The dawn air-patrol of July 24th reported the Australian posts duly in position—"small new semicircular trenches" north-east of the church and just south of the orchard.



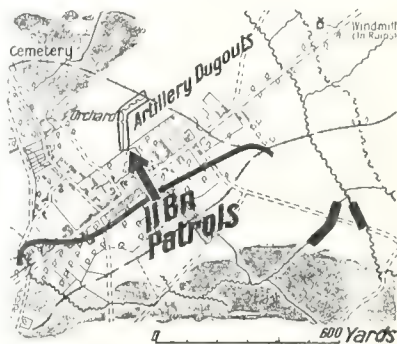
The 3rd Brigade, farther east, had tried to advance in strict accordance with the method prescribed, the patrols, however, being instructed that they should not persist if strong resistance was encountered. At 4.25 p.m. Lieutenant-Colonel Roberts of the 11th passed this order to Captain Medcalf in his front line, but protested without avail to MacLagan that his men were too few and exhausted, and advised that the advance should be undertaken by the 12th, which still had

<sup>29</sup> I remember scrambling over a small plough (wrote Pte. Bourke of the 8th) and a roller and wondering where the old Frenchman was who had owned them.

<sup>30</sup> Its commander, Captain James, was mortally wounded by Australian machine-gun fire from the rear which was grazing the mound by the church.

<sup>31</sup> This may have been connected with the second German counter-attack, which was launched at 3 a.m. and 4 a.m. against the north and east of Pozieres (see pp. 548-9), but of which there is no mention in the 8th Battalion's records.

part of its strength in reserve. Meanwhile the patrols of the 11th had crossed the road under Lieutenants Hallahan and Forbes,<sup>32</sup> who were guided by Corporal Lyon towards the artillery dugouts that he had seen earlier in the day.<sup>33</sup> On catching sight of the Germans beyond the hedge, Forbes called to them to surrender, and a number held up their hands; but commotion was immediately seen in the trench, as if an officer had run up, and a shot was fired. Forbes therefore arranged that he himself should creep with a party round the left or front of the dugouts while Hallahan led his men to their rear. Both Forbes and Lyon were killed as they struggled through the hedge, and several others were hit. The trench being mostly roofed in, and the resistance stubborn, Hallahan brought back the patrols and Colonel Roberts reported that he considered it inadvisable to renew the attack without the co-operation of the 3rd on his left, which, he found, had no orders to attack.



On the extreme right of the village the patrols were not sent out until nearly 8 p.m., when dusk was falling. At that hour Margetts and Vowles sent forward two parties, each of thirty men under an officer, that on the right being under Lieutenant Laing, the vigorous young Scottish-Australian who from the first had guarded this flank. Laing and his men had been especially stung by snipers hidden in ruins and back hedges north of the road; one Australian was killed by Laing's side immediately before the patrol started, and all were eager to hit back.

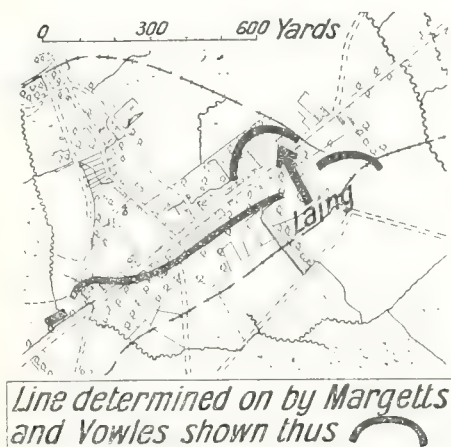
In my opinion (Laing afterwards wrote) the time we then had compensated us for all we suffered before and afterwards. My men came out in one line, no hurry about it. The patrol I had told off to guard my right flank went straight out (*i.e.*, to the east) and *we* went straight for the village (north).

<sup>32</sup> Lieut. S. T. Forbes, 11th Bn. School teacher; of Claremont, W. Aust.; b. Camberwell, Vic., 1 April, 1894. Killed in action, 23 July, 1916.

<sup>33</sup> See p. 534.



The main patrol passed over the road near the northern prong of the light railway.<sup>34</sup> It was from this area that the sniping had come, and several Germans in the ruins, surprised by the sight of men advancing with bayonets, started up and bolted or tried to surrender. One, jumping on a bicycle that lay against the wall of a wireless station, made his escape in spite of the bullets that followed; another fired three times at Laing, and was then shot by a man of the 12th. It was idle for men so caught to expect mercy.



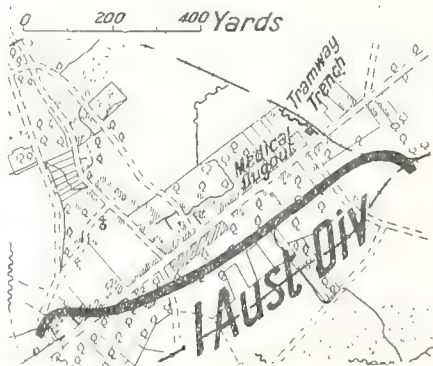
Another (wrote Laing) tried to give himself up (from the wireless dugout) as soon as he saw our chaps on him. "Come out you . . .," yelled one of my men. I heard him, rushed back shouting at the chap to shoot the swine or I would—so he got him. Altogether we killed 6 and captured 18 down the dugouts. The men had great sport chucking bombs down any hole they saw.

The patrol of Margetts' company farther to the left appears to have been less successful; but Laing's vigorous attack had cleared the ground north of the 12th. Margetts and Vowles immediately went across to assure themselves of this, and, having settled upon a line for their companies, returned to lead them up. Snipers from the direction of the O.G. Lines were still active, but Vowles, leading his men forward under shelter of a cross-road hedge, lined them out on the desired position. Margetts did not return, and the news soon spread that he—who had fought with his battalion unwounded from the Landing until it left Gallipoli—had been

<sup>34</sup> See note 67, p. 483. On the street near this point stood a German ambulance waggon, evidently abandoned some days before where a burst of shrapnel had caught it, the two horses dead beside the pole, four dead men on the stretchers within, and one at the door of the waggon, apparently killed when he was being put in.

killed by a chance shell.<sup>35</sup> His men, however, were brought forward, and the two companies dug a long semicircular trench through rubble heaps and back gardens close to the northern hedge-line, making use in parts of an old German work, and bringing each flank back to the road. The 11th Battalion then came forward and assisted in digging the left of this work, and during the night a communication trench was made from its centre leading back across the road, like the stalk of a mushroom.

While Vowles was superintending the formation of the extreme right of the advanced position, where the new line had incorporated an old German trench beside the tramway, he almost stumbled into the dark stairway of a dugout that had been previously bombed and then forgotten. Eighteen prisoners were now taken from it, including one who stated that he was the commandant of Pozières.<sup>36</sup> The dugout, which was a large one with three entrances, was full of surgical dressings and was afterwards known as "the Medical Dugout," and the trench as "Tramway Trench." They were incorporated in the new



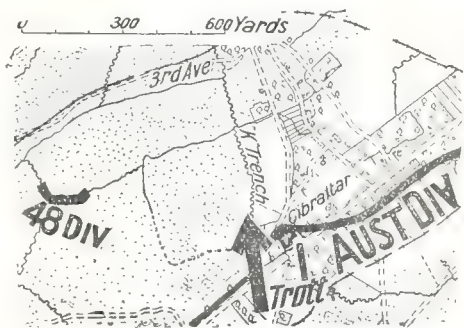
<sup>35</sup> Margetts appears to have been hit while standing outside the trench south of the road. One account states that Sergt. J. A. N. Clark (of Launceston, Tas.) and Pte. L. J. Brown (of Ulverstone, Tas.), both of the 12th Battalion Lewis gun section, were killed by the same shell. Margetts asked to be pulled down into shelter from shell-fire and, knowing his hurt was mortal, told his helpers to "look after the boys." (See Vol. XII, plate 231.)

<sup>36</sup> On discovering the dugout Vowles ordered another bomb to be thrown in. As all was then quiet, two men began to descend the stairs, but hearing voices they came back. Vowles shouted "Parlez vous Français?" A voice below replied "Oui!" and the head of a German appeared at the bottom of the stairs. When motioned to come up, a number of Germans, some wounded, mounted the stairs saying that there was a captain below. Vowles sent for him. This officer, a dapper figure in long grey coat, informed Vowles through Laing, who interpreted, that his name was Ponsonby Lyons; his grandfather had been an Englishman. Seeing the stars on Vowles's shoulders he asked who he was and added: "I am the commandant of Pozières." "Tell him that he was the commandant," said Vowles to Laing, "but that I shall be happy to relieve him!" The German saw the joke. He was sent to the rear with 17 others. These are the 18 prisoners referred to by Laing when describing the fight (see p. 541). German records confirm that Captain Lyons commanded the II/27th I.R. (see p. 524) and that he was captured at Pozières.

line north of the road, forming its extreme right, and were to prove of the greatest value in subsequent fighting.

After these movements had been initiated, more messages arrived from the headquarters of Reserve Army and of the 1st Australian Division to the effect that later information confirmed the report that Pozières had been vacated by the enemy, and urging that the order to occupy the village must be fully carried out. The authorities in rear also believed that the 48th Division had reached "K" Trench at a point 600 yards ahead of the Australians, a signal lamp having been observed flashing, apparently from the junction of that trench with Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben): "5th Warwicks here." The achievement seemed possible, since the 143rd Brigade, consisting of the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Warwickshire, had been endeavouring to bomb towards "K" to join the Australian flank. A company of the 7th Warwicks was accordingly now sent round to Pozières with orders to enter "K" Trench from that end and force its way to the supposed position of the 5th. It found, however, that the Australians were already in "K" Trench and had been ordered to join up with the 5th Warwicks at their supposed position by attacking at dawn. The 7th Warwicks were therefore withdrawn.

At dawn a bombing party of the 2nd Battalion under Lieutenant Trott moved up "K" Trench, anticipating that the 5th Warwicks would be bombing from the front or left front to meet them. Trott's party stumbled on Germans before it expected them, a bomb falling suddenly in its midst and causing momentary confusion. It was then found that



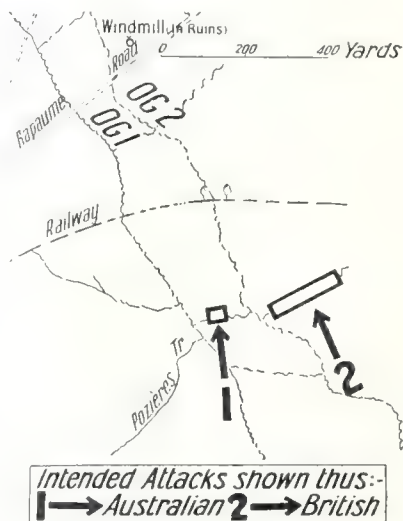
the enemy had barricaded the trench and dug a T-head sap, forming a strong defence. The Australians extended into craters and carried on the bomb-fight; but, as Trott could see no sign of the 48th Division, he was ordered to construct a barricade and hold his present position,

200 yards north of the main road. The 5th Warwicks afterwards reported that their attempts to advance had been held up 400 yards west of "K" Trench; both Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben) and "K" near that point were, indeed, solidly held by the Germans.

Information as to the progress of the troops through Pozières came back very slowly, and during the night General Walker therefore ordered an advance to be made under cover of a bombardment at day-break. On subsequently receiving news that the 8th Battalion, at least, had reached the line intended, this bombardment was reduced to a barrage, to be laid down at 3.30 a.m. north of the village. The order fixing this hour, however, was sent out by the divisional staff so late that it did not reach the battalion commanders until 4 o'clock or later. Consequently no advance from the positions already reached in the village was attempted; nor was any progress made in the O.G. Lines beyond that achieved by Blackburn the day before. Accurate information of the

precise position in that corner was still extraordinarily difficult to obtain.<sup>37</sup> The frontal attack that was to have been made by the Australians from south of Pozières<sup>38</sup> had been postponed till the following night, but the 1st British Division had decided to attack Munster Alley, and the 1st Australian Division agreed to co-operate. Neither the British nor the Australian attack was delivered; the 1st Loyal North Lancashire managed to get two companies into position for assaulting Munster Alley by

3.30, but the scouts who were sent ahead met such a storm of machine-gun fire that, daylight being at hand, the attempt was abandoned. In the O.G. Lines an attempt was made at



<sup>37</sup> Walker sent an officer from divisional headquarters with orders to ascertain the situation by a personal visit.

<sup>38</sup> See p. 530.





40. THE BACK GARDENS OF POZIÈRES SHATTERED BY BRITISH AND GERMAN BOMBARDMENT

Viewed from south of the main road near "Dead Man's Road." In the distance can be seen the old German concrete shelter at the strong-point "Gibraltar." The sandbags of an Australian trench, dug in the first attack, can be seen in the foreground.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ97.  
Taken on 28th August, 1916.*

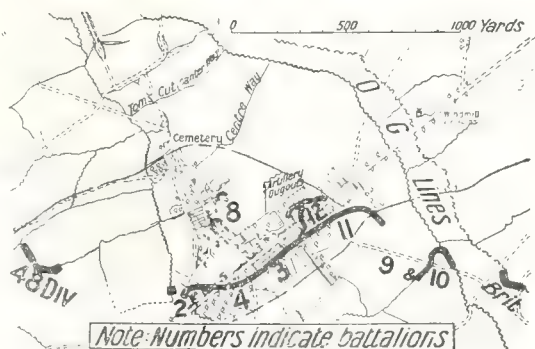


41. THE SITE OF PART OF THE TRENCH-LINE DUG BY THE AUSTRALIANS ON 23RD JULY, 1916,  
THROUGH THE "HOUSES" AND BACK YARDS SOUTH OF THE MAIN ROAD

The photograph, taken three months later, shows how entirely obliterated were both trench-line and houses. (The pipe-line here shown was laid after the battle.)

3.30, after bombardment by a trench-mortar, to seize the German strong-point lying between the two trenches. But the attacking troops apparently lost their way in the shell-torn ground, and, though they suffered few or no casualties, became so disorganised that another company of the 10th, under Major Shaw,<sup>39</sup> was ordered to carry out the assault. However, he was impeded by the bringing back of wounded and by the dead bodies which blocked the trench, and it was not until 6.30 a.m. that he reached the front post<sup>40</sup> in O.G.I. By that time it was broad daylight, and this attempt also was abandoned.

The village of Pozzières had thus been captured, although a gap existed between the posts of the 8th at its northern end and centre and that of the 12th at its eastern end. On the other hand most of "K" Trench on the left, a wide sector of the O.G. Lines on the right, and the artillery dugouts just beyond the centre of the front were strongly held by Germans who fired from those positions on any movement visible to them. Only its own front-line troops realised how far the 12th Battalion had advanced in the north-east of the village.<sup>41</sup>



For purposes of defence the whole line was, indeed, exceptionally well situated. Beyond Pozzières to the north and east the open plateau of the hill-top rose gently for half-a-mile, bordered by the O.G. Lines whose parapet—in German possession—rimmed the horizon. The slightly spoon-shaped stretch of intervening ground had once

<sup>39</sup> Lieut.-Col. G. D. Shaw, 12th Bn. Analytical chemist; of Walkerville, S. Aust.; b. Hindmarsh, S. Aust., 5 July, 1883.

<sup>40</sup> An officer and 45 men of the 9th Battalion.

<sup>41</sup> This fine Tasmanian battalion, under Colonel Elliott, was usually the last in the brigade to report its position after an advance, but it could generally be assumed to have reached its objective. "I'm not a bit anxious about old Charlie Elliott and the 12th," said the brigadier, during a hard-fought battle at Ypres on 20 September, 1917. "So long as I don't hear, I know things are going all right!"



been cultivated but now resembled open pasture. It was entirely devoid of trees, hedges, or other cover except that afforded by shell-holes thickly interspersed through the herbage, and by the artillery dugouts north of the village hedge, and two much battered communication trenches leading from the direction of "K" to the O.G. Lines.<sup>42</sup> In order to counter-attack, an enemy force must approach over the crest (which was continuously watched from Ovillers, Black Watch Alley, and elsewhere by artillery observers of the 25th British and 1st Australian Divisions) and sweep across the open in the face of fire from the artillery, from Lewis guns along the whole front, and from Vickers machine-guns mainly in rear. Thus, provided the Australian line was not crushed by artillery-fire, and was kept supplied with food, water, and ammunition, it had little to fear. Supplies had again gone forward, 200 men of the 2nd Australian Division having at dusk on July 23rd been allotted to take over that duty from the 2nd Brigade.<sup>43</sup>

The narrative of events on the German side must now go back and be continued from the time of the failure of the first counter-attack (by the III/157th) early on July 23. The general policy of German defence on the Somme had been indicated by the commander of the 117th Division to his troops upon their entering the battle at Pozières. His order directed that

not an inch of trench must be abandoned to the enemy. Every effort must be made to strengthen the position, and if the enemy penetrates, to drive him out at once by an immediate counter-attack. Sectors adjoining an attacked sector must aid by flanking fire and infantry attack without waiting for orders. The infantry will so occupy the sector that rear trenches are continuously manned to act as reserves for counter-attack.

This embodied the general policy of the German defence. In accordance therewith the divisional commander now directed that his troops must carry out further counter-attacks with the greatest despatch, and under all circumstances must drive their opponents from the captured positions. A reserve company of the 11th R.I.R. was therefore sent up to help that regiment to clear Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben) of the British; as to the Pozières front, orders were issued at 11 a.m. that the 157th Regiment (117th Division) and 27th Regiment (7th Division) must deliver a combined counter-attack. It was at this time believed that the 157th was holding the line of the main street—where indeed some of its troops were in dugouts although Australians were roaming through the neighbouring ruins. The artillery was, therefore, at 11 a.m. directed to keep the ground south and south-west of Pozières under fire and to lay down a barrage in front of the right flank of the 7th Division, so that the

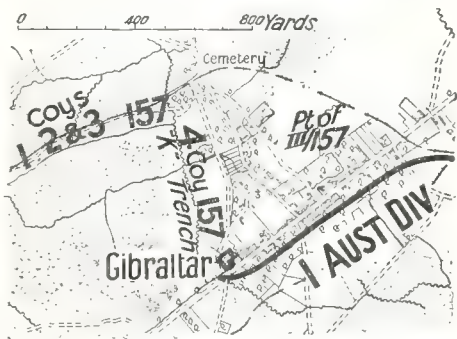
<sup>42</sup> The northern of these, the German "Ganter Weg" (known to the Australians as "Tom's Cut"), now formed part of the German front line. The southern afterwards formed part of "Centre Way."

<sup>43</sup> An additional 200 was afterwards detached from the 2nd Division for this purpose.



Australians should be prevented from pushing reinforcements into the village. The resulting barrage was that which fell on Casualty Corner and Contalmaison Valley during July 23, but missed the front-line troops.

The position, while this counter-attack was in preparation, was as follows: the three companies of the III/157th<sup>44</sup> occupied the artillery dugouts and other positions in or near the north of Pozières which they had taken up when their early counter-attack failed. Of the I/157th, the 3rd company and part of the 4th still held firm in "K" Trench, while the 1st and 2nd faced the British in Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben). Another part of the 4th company with three machine-guns under Lieutenant Ertels had in the early morning fallen back on Gibraltar. At 5 a.m. Ertels' comrades in "K" could still hear his machine-guns firing; but, though Lieutenant Roske of the 3rd company succeeded in making his way up "K" Trench to within a short distance, he could not reach him. During the day it became clear that the Australians had penetrated farther than was previously thought; the eastern extremity of the village was reported to be in their hands,<sup>45</sup> and it was discovered that during the previous night they had reached the crest near the windmill.



The combined counter-attack was to be made at 5 p.m. on July 23, after two hours' bombardment. The III/157th was to attack from the north of Pozières with three companies, while two companies of the II/62nd (7th Division), specially allotted to the 27th, advanced from the main road near the windmill. Before 5 o'clock, however, it was evident that the bombardment had been insufficient. The group commander, von Armin, afterwards reported that it had failed to destroy the opposing machine-guns, and had not rendered the opposing infantry ripe for attack. (Actually it had not fallen on them except in the area of the 4th Battalion at the south-western corner of the village.) Moreover, the preparatory movement of troops had been observed by British artillery;<sup>46</sup> the two companies of the II/62nd had lost a third of their strength in coming up the Bapaume road, and were in no condition to take part. The loss of the 157th also had been severe. The attack therefore was postponed. The evening report of the 117th Division stated that the Australians now held all Pozières up to the main road; and that in Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben) the 11th R.I.R., after twice attacking the British with grenades and winning 130 yards of trench, had been

<sup>44</sup> The 10th, 11th, and 12th companies; the 9th was still uncommitted.

<sup>45</sup> Actually at this time it was not.

<sup>46</sup> At 2.30 p.m. it was reported by artillery observers of the III (British) Corps that Germans were advancing across the open towards Pozières cemetery. The heavy artillery of the III Corps and field artillery of the 1st British Division were informed of this. From 2.35 to 3.50 the 8th Battery, Australian Field Artillery, was firing on the crest north-east of Pozières where the Germans "were reported to be reinforcing." These were probably the two companies of the 62nd.

again driven back. The divisional commander now expressed the opinion that the attack must be renewed at once—during the night of the 23rd—even if it meant putting in the last reserves; otherwise his opponents would have time to strengthen their two positions (in Third Avenue west of Pozières, and in Pozières), and counter-attack would become still more difficult.

New troops were then arriving in the back area, the IX Reserve Corps (comprising the 17th and 18th Reserve Divisions) from near Lens being on its way to relieve von Armin's IV Corps.<sup>47</sup> On the outbreak of the battle of July 23 several advance battalions of this corps had been moved up to Warlencourt, Eaucourt-l'Abbaye, and Gueudecourt, villages close behind the German line, and at 5 p.m. the I and II Battalions of the 86th R.I.R. (18th Reserve Division) at Warlencourt and Le Sars were placed under the administrative control of the 117th Division. As the II/157th—the reserve in Courcellette—was to be used this night in relieving the much-tried I/157th in Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben) and "K" Trench, the I/86th was ordered to Courcellette as reserve in emergency, but not to be used for the projected counter-attack. To set free for this attack all available troops of the 157th, the brigade commander (Colonel Weise) sent up his last reserve, the 5/22nd R., to the rearward trenches. This left the 7th, 9th, and remnants of the 10th, 11th, and 12th companies of the 157th to undertake it, together with two platoons of the II/62nd and two companies of the 26th I.R.,<sup>48</sup> which were ordered to assemble at 10 p.m. for that purpose in trenches north of Pozières. The counter-attack on the British in Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben) was to be undertaken by the 11th R.I.R., which would assault from the west of the breach in the line.

Of these counter-attacks, that on Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben) was reported to have made headway, but not to have driven through to the 157th R.I.R. east of the breach; that against Pozières was for some reason delayed. The night was a wild one; the artillery-fire was so heavy that the relief of the tired I/157th by the II/157th, though ordered by von Armin, could not be carried out. The I/86th R.I.R. had retired from Courcellette, apparently through misinterpretation of an order. The Germans north of Pozières were, moreover, uncertain of the position of the Australians. It had previously been reported to lie along the main road; but a patrol of the 2nd Musketeer Battalion near the cemetery, on going forward to discover, heard men, presumably<sup>49</sup> in the north of the village, talking and digging and, on challenging, received a reply in English. According to the German official history, the thrust of the Australians through Pozières had before midnight caused the remnants of the III/157th to fall back on the O.G. Lines, abandoning the switches from which the counter-attack was to have been launched and thereby much increasing the difficulty of preparation.

<sup>47</sup> The bringing up of the IX Corps became known at once to the British staff through the capture of prisoners.

<sup>48</sup> The 26th I.R., which had been previously engaged in very heavy fighting in Longueval and Delville Wood, was now organised in six companies, each consisting of two of the original companies. Two of the new companies were now allotted to the 157th, but one of these (attached to II/157) was not brought up till next day.

<sup>49</sup> In the prisoner's statement from which these facts are obtained the location is not stated, but as a later patrol picked up an "English" cap and shovel, it seems probable that the Australians were Traill's company of the 8th, which advanced too far and then withdrew (*see p. 539*).

The company of the 26th which was to attack from O.G.1, north of the Bapaume road, had arrived on the previous evening and received (according to the regimental history) the order to attack at 4 a.m., the signal being the firing of fifteen red flares. At 4 o'clock this company began to climb out of its trench in order to attack; but, as there was no sign of co-operation by the troops on its right, its commander called a halt, and reported the fact to the nearest senior officer of the 157th. Upon ascertaining that the statement was true, the latter countermanded the order to attack. Yet an effort had been made. The 157th afterwards reported that the troops had been duly lined out upon tapes laid to mark their starting position, but that the advance at 3 a.m. (*sic*) was met by an intense shell-fire and lively machine-gun fire, and melted away. It seems possible that it was caught in the barrage which, under the abortive plan of attack, the British and Australian artillery had laid down at 3.30 north of the village. A few Germans are said to have reached the western part of the village, but to have been driven thence to its northern edge by the Australians. After the failure a hopeless attempt was made to reorganise and attack again. This also broke down.

The German plans for recapturing Pozières had thus by the morning of July 24 already thrice failed—the early morning assaults on July 23 and 24, through the artillery or machine-gun fire of their opponents; and the intended operation on the afternoon of July 23, through the failure of their own and the success of their enemy's artillery. Far from driving back their opponents, the Germans had been continuously forced back, their staff learning at 7.10 a.m. on the 24th that Pozières up to its north-west corner was completely in the hands of the Australians, who during the night had established themselves in several nests north of the main road. Facing the Australians was still a line of the 157th Regiment extending from the extreme north-western point of the village along communication trenches to the O.G. Lines.

It has been seen that the Australian position in Pozières was exceedingly strong from the point of view of defence. The whole purpose of the Pozières operations, however, was to attack, and early on July 24th the 1st Australian Division received from General Gough through I Anzac Corps a telegram urging action:

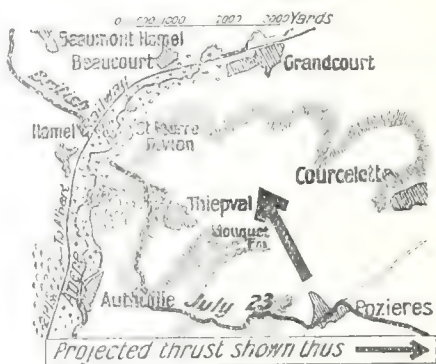
Army commander considers it essential you should get remainder of village promptly and by determined effort.

By an order issued later in the day Gough explained his policy—to gain the "Second Line" ridge east and north of Pozières, and then drive northward along its summit past Mouquet Farm until the down-slope into the Ancre valley was reached,<sup>50</sup> "thus cutting off Thiepval and getting observation over Courcelette and Grandcourt." The I Anzac Corps would be

<sup>50</sup> The wording of the order (issued at 2.30 p.m., July 24), was: "Further operations of the Reserve Army will be conducted with a view to establishing ourselves at Mouquet Farm and on the high ground in X5, R35, 34, 27, 21, thus cutting off Thiepval," &c.



responsible for all operations east of and including "K" Trench—that is, for all fighting along the ridge—II Corps continuing its effort to bomb up the trenches west of "K."<sup>51</sup> The general strategy of aiming at the isolation of Thiepval by driving a long sharp salient in its rear will be discussed when its effects come to be described. Gough's order stated that there were indications that, with the exception of the O.G. Lines, the stretch of country to be captured was not strongly held.



If delays occur (he added) reinforcements will certainly be brought forward, so that it is most important to act with vigour.

The 1st Australian Division was expected on that day to clear Pozières as far as the cemetery and establish posts about half-way across the open space north-east of the village in or near the two communication trenches that traversed it, and also at the junction of the Bapaume and Courcellette roads east of the village. The division would then be facing the O.G. Lines for 1,000 yards north of the Bapaume road, and the next phase would be an attack upon that position. Artillery observers were, therefore, to establish themselves as soon as possible in positions from which they could see the wire in front of the O.G. Lines.

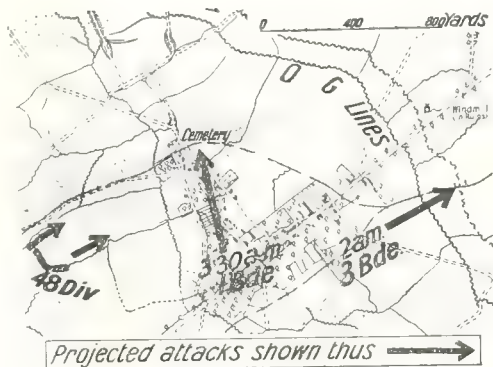


<sup>51</sup> Birdwood appears to have asked that the II Corps (48th Division) should be directed northwards against the ridge north of Pozières cemetery—that is, east of "K" Trench as well as west of it—while his corps attacked north-eastwards against the O.G. Lines.



The immediate operation for the 1st Division was, therefore, to secure a "jumping-off line" for the next phase by making "a determined attack." This was, it will be noted, the method which General Walker had intended to employ on the previous day when his plans had been superseded by General Gough's. In conjunction with the III Corps the 1st Australian Division was already charged with making, on the night of July 24th, the postponed frontal attack<sup>52</sup> upon the portion of the O.G. Lines south of the Bapaume road—a sector 600 yards in length which had been part of the 3rd Brigade's objective in the first attack. The division being thus faced with two important operations, it was arranged to carry them out during the ensuing night, but not simultaneously, since the troops for both attacks had to use the same approaches. The assault on the O.G.

Lines was to be made at 2 a.m. and the advance through the village at 3.30. For the former the 3rd Brigade was strengthened with the 5th Battalion and half the 7th, both from the 2nd Brigade, still in reserve; for the advance through Pozières the 1st Brigade still had, in



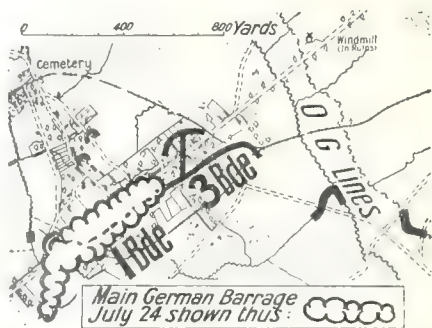
addition to its own troops, the 8th Battalion, of which only two companies had yet moved through Pozières. To link the two advances, part of the 5th Field Company of engineers<sup>53</sup> was, during the night, to dig the advanced strong-post at the junction of the Courcelette and Bapaume roads east of Pozières; and thence the 12th Battalion would extend itself along the main road to the O.G. Lines. To the left of the 12th, the 11th Battalion would seize the artillery dugouts and form a line through their farther end to connect with the troops making the main advance to Pozières cemetery. The northern prong of the old railway marked out the required

<sup>52</sup> See pp. 530 (sketch) and 544.

<sup>53</sup> Detached from the 2nd Australian Division.

line round the north of Pozières as if by intention, and officers of the 11th Battalion were accordingly directed to dig in along it. On each flank of the whole operation, part of a British division would be attacking—the 1st British Division against Munster Alley, and the 48th up the communication trenches west of "K."

The 24th of July was beautifully fine, and there was ample time for the preparation of the projected double attack.<sup>54</sup> Having twice seen the dawn break, the front-line troops were very tired, but in high spirits and still practically untouched by the enemy barrage.<sup>55</sup> About 7 o'clock on the 24th, however, the German artillery shortened its range, some batteries apparently adopting the line of the main road as the line for their barrage, while others shelled the south-west of Pozières, especially the low road-cutting through which the Chalk Pit road debouched into the main street. One battery of 5.9-inch howitzers in particular began systematically to enfilade the trench-line south of the main road, sector by sector, the salvoes coming from the direction of Courcellette, and, at this stage, flying over the 3rd Brigade sector to burst in that of the 1st. The ground had already been much shattered by the British bombardment, and though the trench-walls had thus far stood without revetting, any shell bursting in the ground near by closed them together as one might close



a book, or else tumbled them in, burying and half-burying the men in loose soil. Wherever this happened, the men left unhurt were next moment digging furiously to extricate their mates; and, though these were often exhumed alive even after being completely buried, their nerves naturally had been subjected to a most violent shock. As the whine of the salvoes could be heard and the shells actually seen for a few seconds

<sup>54</sup> See p. 551.

<sup>55</sup> The barrage had been falling in rear, and the troops there suffered. Thus a company of the 8th, passing through the shelled zone to the support position, had lost 25 men in the barrage—17 by a single shell-burst.

before the explosion, the speculation as to where each would fall caused an intense nerve-strain, especially in those who had once been buried. Except at the south-west end, on which field-guns and 4.2-inch guns were also used, and on the Chalk Pit road, which was drenched with tear-shell, the bombardment was not intense; but it continued hour after hour from morning until late in the afternoon, easing for three hours at midday but afterwards gradually extending to the old line of the 11th in Pozières cove, which was still occupied by Captain Medcalf and some of the supports. The troops who on the previous night had pushed to the north of the village escaped heavy bombardment, most of the shells falling behind them.<sup>56</sup> The line near Gibraltar suffered more severely, and was in a bad way, only half the rations having come through. Major Rowlands<sup>57</sup> of the 2nd reported "eight men with shell-shock, praying to be paraded before the doctor."<sup>58</sup> The troops there held on; but where the front bent back to the Bapaume road Captain Gilder's<sup>59</sup> company suffered such casualties that it was withdrawn, Gilder himself being badly shell-shocked. Next to it, in the trenches of the 4th Battalion

nearly everyone has been buried at least once and we are kept busy digging ourselves out of the blown-down trench.<sup>60</sup>

Colonel Mackay asked his company commanders to consider whether casualties might not be lessened by advancing across the road, but the opinion was that it was safer to stay where they were. Of the 3rd Battalion sector, next on the right, Captain Harris, its commander, afterwards wrote:

Most of the firing was enfilade, and as the line . . . ran parallel and close to the main road, our position was accurately marked down. As fast as one portion of the trench was cleared another was blown in. There were no dugouts in which men on post could take shelter, and the only thing to do was to grin and bear it. The shells, which were dropping almost perpendicularly, could be clearly seen in the last 40 feet of their descent, and the whole trench was methodically dealt with. The bombardment lasted all day, and during its worst period four shells a minute were falling in or near the company's sector. . . . The wounded were so many that the stretcher-bearers, who were working like heroes, could not

<sup>56</sup> Captain Traill, however, was seriously wounded by a shell.

<sup>57</sup> Major V. S. Rowlands, 2nd Bn. Estate agent; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Paddington, N.S.W., 31 Jan., 1889. Killed in action, 30 Sept., 1916.

<sup>58</sup> The 2nd Battalion in "K" Trench was also under fire of some of its own heavy artillery, whose shells fell short. Its men were cheered, however, to observe that the German garrison in the same trench north of them was for a time heavily shelled by the German artillery.

<sup>59</sup> Lieut.-Col. A. E. B. Gilder, 2nd Bn. Journalist; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Paddington, N.S.W., 3 March, 1894.

<sup>60</sup> Diary of Sgt. de Vine.

get them away. The men who were not wounded were kept busy digging out men who were buried alive by the explosions caving in the trench sides. I had occasion to bless my "tin hat," for in our portion of the trench the parapet was composed of the debris of a ruined house—and a shell pushed over a barrow-load of bricks on to my head with no other ill effect but some bruises on the shoulders. The Colonel (Owen Howell-Price) was up and down the line all day, setting a magnificent example. I had been dazed by a series of explosions too close to be pleasant and at 7 p.m. the Colonel sent me down to Battalion headquarters. . . .<sup>61</sup>

The extreme difficulty of clearing the wounded was, in that part, met by the resource of a middle-aged private named Jenkins<sup>62</sup>—a soldier who had been constantly in "hot water" when out of the line.

During the heaviest of the bombardment this man constituted himself the attendant of those wounded men who could not be removed. Under heavy shell-fire he raised a shelter for them where there was a little more protection than in the trench, and took them over one by one across the open. He looked after them with the utmost tenderness, expended the last drop of water in his bottle to alleviate their thirst, and, when a small quantity of fresh water was brought up, refused a drink himself in order that his patients might have more. He cheered them up by telling them that the stretcher-bearers would soon be along . . . and I firmly believe kept several of them alive by his efforts. Every single one of these wounded men was eventually taken out and recovered; but at the end of the day he himself, when taking along a dixie of tea to the sufferers, was blown to pieces by a shell.

In the 1st Brigade sector the barrage fell most heavily and regularly upon the sunken end of the Chalk Pit road (sometimes known as Dead Man's Road). On its shattered banks the corpses both of Australians and of the British who had preceded them lay sprinkled over with the dust of shell explosions, which painted roadside, tree-stumps, and foliage with one dry dun self-colour. So severe were the losses of parties bringing up water and rations along this track that Colonel Stevens of the 2nd Battalion recommended its entire avoidance.<sup>63</sup> Near by, in the miserable niche that served as headquarters for that brigade, the eyes of officers and clerks smarted and streamed from the effect of tear-gas. Standing at

<sup>61</sup> After his nerves had been somewhat refreshed by a sleep at battalion headquarters (a German dugout in Contalmaison Valley), Captain Harris was climbing the dugout stair to return to the front when an incident occurred which (he states) "terminated my further interest in proceedings. When I arrived at the top of the dugout I was met by the explosion of a 'whizz-bang' (77-mm. shell) which just hit the top of the parapet, killed a man who had just stepped out of the dugout in front of me, and knocked me down to the bottom of the steps with the dead man on top of me."

<sup>62</sup> Pte. E. Jenkins (No. 2622; 3rd Bn.). Bushman; b. Woolloomooloo, N.S.W., 1871. Killed in action, 24 July, 1916.

<sup>63</sup> The track, however, continued to be used.



the narrow dugout entrance, Major Biddle,<sup>64</sup> *liaison* officer for the artillery, was wounded—at exactly the same spot Captain Herbertson,<sup>65</sup> *liaison* officer for the engineers, had been killed on the night of July 22nd. Runner after runner was killed in the dangerous trench and on the road outside it.

The plumes of dust and shell-smoke spurting intermittently from among the trees and ruins of Pozières were visible all day in that portion of the battle area, and reports of the shelling were received not only from the troops on the spot, but from artillery observers of British divisions on the flanks. An aeroplane was sent up in the morning to endeavour to counter the bombardment by directing the fire of some 12-inch howitzers upon the enemy guns then shelling the village. At 6.20 p.m., however, the 34th Divisional Artillery (III Corps), whose own front was described as having been quiet all day, reported the shelling of Pozières, adding:

Our artillery is not replying and considerable damage is being done to trenches and rather severe casualties to men.

The Anzac Corps accordingly asked the II Corps (whose staff had that day relieved that of the X Corps on the left of I Anzac) to “turn on” batteries to counter the fire.<sup>66</sup> About that time the shelling eased. The trench-line, which had been dug during the previous day—a good seven or eight feet deep along the south of the road—had been so wrecked that the reserve companies of the 4th, going forward to relieve its front companies, “got lost in the ruins of the village, finding it quite impossible to recognise any semblance of our trench.”<sup>67</sup>

The reason for this bombardment is given in the German records. The failure of the three previous counter-attacks on Pozières was attributed by the German staff to inadequate preparation by their artillery, whose bombardments had so far left their opponents unaffected and “completely in possession of their defensive strength.” The commander of the 117th Division, therefore, at 8.25 this morning (July 24) ordered the divisional heavy artillery to bombard the whole of Pozières except its north-west corner. At 9 o'clock the army commander, who was still determined that the village must be recaptured, sent him an order pointing out the importance of its possession and the necessity of establishing a barrier to any British

<sup>64</sup> Major F. L. Biddle, D.S.O.; 2nd A.F.A. Bde. Departmental manager; of East Melbourne, Vic.; b. Clifton Hill, Vic., 27 Oct., 1885. Died of wounds, 17 Aug., 1917.

<sup>65</sup> Capt. R. C. Herbertson, 1st Fld. Coy., Engrs. Mining engineer and surveyor; of Brisbane and Mount Morgan, Q'land; b. Clunes, Vic., 7 April, 1882. Killed in action, 23 July, 1916.

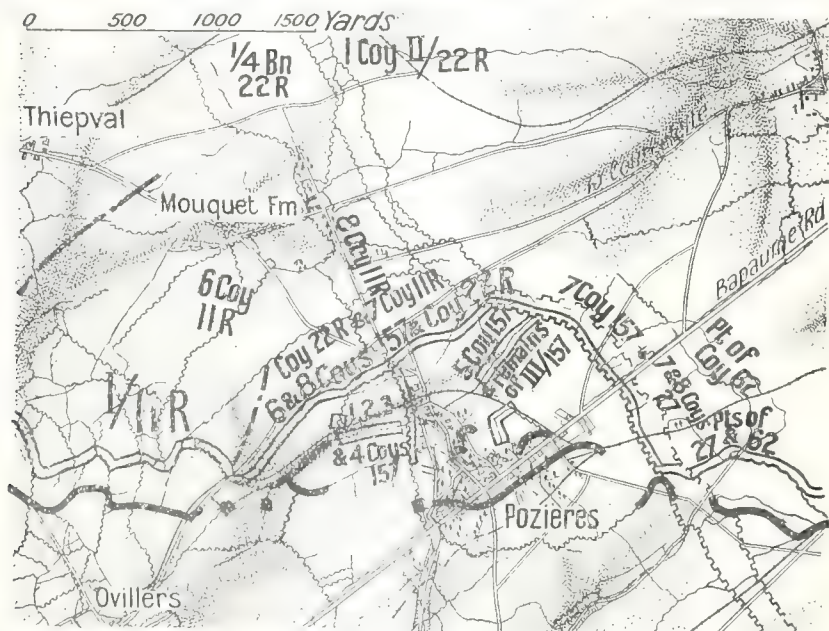
<sup>66</sup> The II Corps at 7 p.m., upon an order from Reserve Army, fired twelve rounds from 15-inch howitzers into Courcelette in retaliation for the shelling of Pozières.

<sup>67</sup> Diary of Sgt. de Vine.

advance north of it. The Australian advance was threatening the western flank of the 11th R.I.R. The front was accordingly reorganised, the sector of the 117th Division being shortened by the relief of the northern battalion of its 22nd R.I.R. from the line near Thiepval.<sup>68</sup> The two companies thus relieved were placed in two switch trenches behind the threatened flank. The whole strength of the 117th had now been distributed in a series of positions, one behind the other, with a view to blocking any British advance northwards along the Second Line ridge.<sup>69</sup> But its 157th Regiment was in desperate condition:—

No communication with the artillery. The posts crumbled in through enemy artillery-fire; day and night no rest, no sleep, supply system defective; having no deep dugouts, absolutely unprotected against fire from enemy artillery, trench mortars, and aircraft. Only after increasing delays could help be brought those who were wounded or buried.

The only troops with which the division could have organised a new counter-attack were the I/86th R.I.R., which had been ordered back to Courcellette and placed, now apparently without restriction,

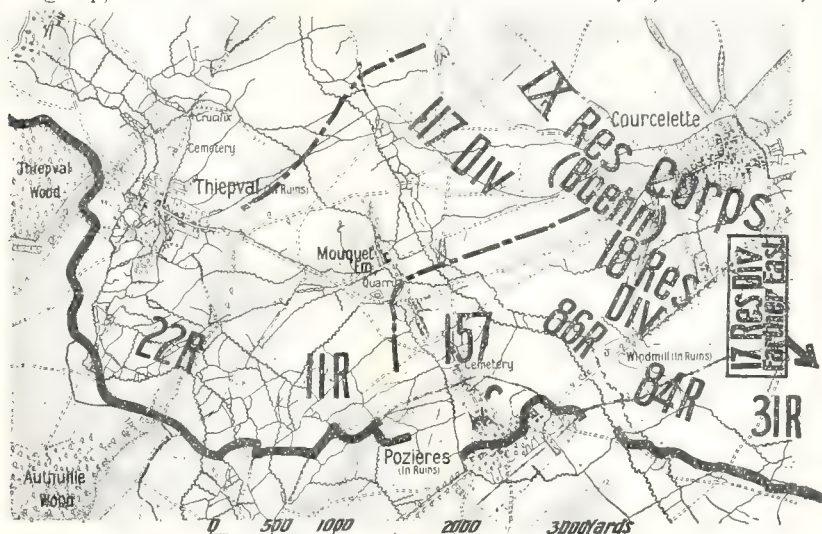


<sup>68</sup> The 26th Reserve Division of Group Stein took over this part of the front. According to one account, the sectors of the two other regiments of the 117th Division (11th R.I.R. and 157th I.R.) were also narrowed.

<sup>69</sup> In front of the 48th British Division the 11th R.I.R. was distributed as far back as Mouquet Farm, three-quarters of a mile to the north, with a company of the 22nd R.I.R., half-a-mile farther in rear, holding a knot of trenches known as the "Feste Zollern." Farther east the tired I/157 and III/157 still held the front line opposing the right of the 48th Division and the Australians; but the two companies of the 22nd R.I.R. from the front line near Thiepval were now stationed in Ganter Weg ("Fourth Avenue" and "Tom's Cut") and Gierich Weg ("Fifth Avenue" and "Park Lane"), two communication trenches lying between the front and Mouquet Farm. One company of the II/157 had been sent forward to strengthen the III/157; the rest of the II/157, with part of the 22nd R.I.R., lay in support trenches north and north-east of Pozieres (the main support position was the O.G. Lines).

under the 157th Regiment, but had suffered loss from artillery-fire. Although the German army commander rightly apprehended that Thiepval was threatened, and therefore laid importance upon the recapture of Pozières, he did not wish to risk a repetition of previous failures. Strong and ample bombardment and fresh troops were obviously necessary. Given these, it was thought that, with careful organisation, the village could be retaken with comparatively little loss and without undue expenditure of ammunition.

In these circumstances von Below decided to await the arrival of the IX Reserve Corps, which that day would take over this part of the line from the IV Corps, and to entrust to its commander, General von Boehn, the responsibility for future operations against Pozières. Von Boehn's divisions (consisting of troops from Mecklenburg, Schleswig-Holstein, and the Hanseatic towns) were already moving up, the 18th Reserve Division behind the 7th, and the 17th



Reserve Division more to the east, behind the 8th. At midday on July 24 he took over command of all troops detailed for the recapture of Pozières, including those of the 117th and 7th Divisions, and delegated the task of recapturing Pozières to Major-General Wellmann of the 18th Reserve Division, which was about to take over the front of the 7th. Any infantry of the 117th Division north-east of Pozières was to be relieved; and for the relief of the worn-out 27th in the O.G. Lines General Wellmann chose the 86th R.I.R.,<sup>70</sup> which, with the two battalions still under its control, would be responsible for the main counter-attack. Its other battalion (though under the 157th Regimental staff) would also attack from the sector of the 157th, north of Pozières, which was added to Wellmann's command. The artillery of the 117th Division was retained to assist in supporting the counter-attack, which would not be delivered until 4.30 p.m. on July 25. This hour was chosen because previous attacks made at dawn had failed.

<sup>70</sup> This regiment was from the Danish border, one of its home-towns being Angeln, one of the birthplaces of the "English" race. It was commanded by Lieut.-Col. Burmester.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TAKING OF POZIÈRES (III)—JULY 25TH AND 26TH

EACH side at Pozières was now projecting an important operation: the Australians, having seized the village, were to extend their positions by the double attack in the small hours of July 25th. The Germans were planning to retake the village fourteen hours later. Needless to say, neither side had the least knowledge of the other's intention. But at 9 p.m. on July 24th the German bombardment, which had ceased in Pozières village about 7 o'clock, again descended heavily upon its approaches, continuing until 10. This was almost certainly intended to hamper any preparations for further attack that might chance to be in hand; and such preparations were indeed in full swing. At 8 o'clock the 5th Battalion entered Black Watch Alley on its way to deliver, together with two companies of the 7th, the earlier part of the double attack—namely the frontal assault on the O.G. Lines south of the Bapaume road. The whole force for this half of the operation was under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Le Maistre<sup>1</sup> of the 5th. The O.G. Lines both north and south of the road had been methodically bombarded before dusk by the heavy batteries.<sup>2</sup> The plan of attack was that the 5th in six successive waves (two companies in front and two in rear<sup>3</sup>) should at 2 a.m. assault the front of O.G.1 as far north as the crossing of the old light railway, while the two companies of the 7th (one in front and one in rear) should similarly attack between the railway and the Bapaume road. At the same time half the regimental bombing platoon of the 10th, supported by two platoons, were to rush the German strong-point which had so far been resisting progress up the O.G. Lines.<sup>4</sup> The front companies of the 7th and

<sup>1</sup> Lieut.-Col. F. W. Le Maistre, D.S.O. Commanded 5th Bn., 1915/16. Departmental manager; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, 22 Feb., 1882.

<sup>2</sup> The 36th, 55th (Australian), and 108th Batteries (8-in., 9.2-in., and 6-in. respectively) fired 450 rounds on O.G.1 north of the old railway. The artillery of the III Corps fired similarly on O.G.2.

<sup>3</sup> In each company the waves were to be: 1st wave, one platoon; 2nd wave, two platoons; 3rd wave, one platoon (carriers).

<sup>4</sup> In order to consolidate the front in these lines, on the night of July 24 a good trench was dug connecting O.G.1 with O.G.2 at a point close behind the front. This work, carried out under difficulty by half the 10th Battalion under Major Shaw, provided the only link between the British and Australian troops in that area.



5th having taken and consolidated O.G.1, the rear companies, at 2.20, would advance and seize O.G.2. Half the regimental bombing platoon of the 7th was then to protect the left flank in both trenches; the bombing platoon of the 5th would be on the right, guarding the entrance to Munster Alley. Although the area of attack was close at hand, only one officer from each company in the 5th Battalion appears to have been sent forward to view it by daylight. The commanders of the two companies of the 7th were shown by Le Maistre the two trees standing where the railway crossed the O.G. Lines, which marked the proposed dividing line between the battalions in the objective.



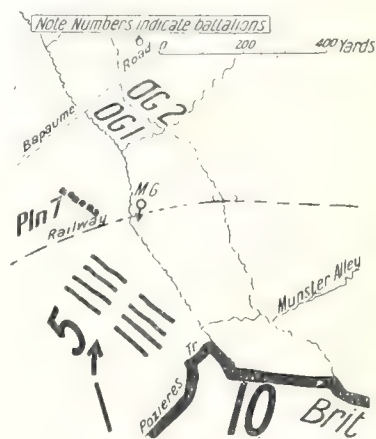
At the conference with III Corps the frontal method of attack had been chosen by General White in preference to that of bombing up the trenches, since the artillery could give far more assistance, and in bomb-warfare the German soldier was quite equal to his opponents, if not better. White was insistent that infantry must, wherever possible, be launched "square-on" to their objective. The "jumping-off trench"<sup>5</sup> was unfinished, but a starting position parallel to the O.G. Lines was to be marked by the 5th Battalion with a tape. The detachment of the 7th would reach the tape by filing out of Pozières Trench at 11 p.m. and heading northwards across the open till its leading files reached the Bapaume road. The 5th would follow the 7th, its front companies moving out first and the rear companies later. The intelligence officer of the 5th, Lieutenant Gray,<sup>6</sup> and a scout had crept out after dark carrying tape and pegs, and Gray had pegged the northern end; but his assistant was wounded, and the southern

<sup>5</sup> Part of the 9th and 10th Battalions were digging this trench from Pozières Trench to the east end of Pozières village, almost parallel to the objective.

<sup>6</sup> Lieut. H. Gray, 5th Bn. Student; of Caulfield, Vic.; b. Murtoa, Vic., 1895. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.

end straggled obliquely across No-Man's Land. The companies of the 7th, on their way through the communication trenches to the starting-point, found that, by some mistake, those of the 5th were passing ahead of them, and waited until these had gone by before themselves moving into the open. The attack was by that time commencing, and only one platoon of the 7th, under Lieutenant Sutherland,<sup>7</sup> reached its proper starting-point north of the railway. The supporting company, misdirected by some of the 11th, turned left instead of right, and found itself in a communication trench leading to Pozières.

The 5th, however, reached the proper starting position, Captain Leadbeater,<sup>8</sup> in charge of its leading company, and Sergeant Blair,<sup>9</sup> though unable to find the tape, sending their men across the open in the right direction. The front lines were duly in place, lying under a casual fire of rifles and machine-guns,<sup>10</sup> and the rear companies were moving across the open to take position behind them when, at 1.58 a.m., the covering bombardment crashed upon the O.G. Lines, the artillery of the 1st Australian Division placing a heavy curtain of shrapnel on O.G.1, and that of the 34th Division upon O.G.2. After two minutes the curtain on O.G.1 was raised, that on O.G.2 being arranged to continue for another twenty minutes. At 1.59 the officers of the 5th shouted the order to advance. The ground was pock-marked with large shell-craters, and German machine-guns almost immediately opened a fierce cross-fire from several directions, the nearest post being apparently where the low



<sup>7</sup> Lieut. H. A. Sutherland, 7th Bn. Bank accountant; of Dandenong, Vic.; b. Dandenong, 28 July, 1891.

<sup>8</sup> Capt. J. Leadbeater, 5th Bn. Clerk; of Sydney, N.S.W., and Leek, Staffs., Eng.; b. Congleton, Cheshire, Eng., 18 Jan., 1877. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.

<sup>9</sup> Sgt. H. McG. Blair (No. 746, 5th Bn.). Blacksmith; of Newport, Vic.; b. Stirling, Scotland, 4 Apr., 1886. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.

<sup>10</sup> Afterwards, some of the 5th were of opinion that at about 1.45 a.m. their mess-tins or haversacks had been seen in the light of flares.

embankment of the old railway crossed the O.G. Lines. The German artillery presently opened. The front of the 5th was not parallel with O.G.1 and there was a moment of wild confusion, in which the line split into groups, each searching for it, some making south-east, others north-east. Eventually some one recognised the trench, and a rush was made for it, all groups getting in. Its garrison had fled, only a few dead being left. The 5th had been instructed that O.G.1 must be consolidated before the advance to O.G.2, but O.G.1 was in many parts so damaged as to be barely distinguishable from the surrounding craters. Moreover, the troops had lost much time in searching for it, and there had been no chance of restoring organisation. Accordingly Captain Lillie, the "Pink Kid" of Gallipoli fame,<sup>11</sup> who, though no more than a boy, was senior officer in the captured line, gave the order to hold the line in O.G.1. About 2.25, however, the barrage on O.G.2 having just lifted, Captain Leadbeater, who was on the extreme left and had not heard of Lillie's decision, led his men forward, and, seeing the left go, Lillie ordered the right also to move. A few men were left in O.G.1, but almost the whole force swept forward. Heavy fire at once broke out again from several directions, and in its face there followed another search for the objective, groups scouring the shell-pitted surface for traces of the trench. It was eventually found, recognisable only by the abandoned articles of German equipment. Having by 2.40 definitely assured himself that this was the trench, Lillie reported its capture, and the troops began to dig in.

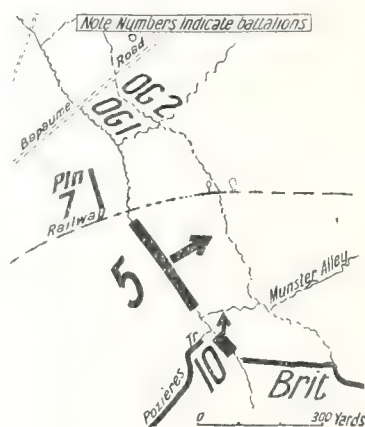
Meanwhile the bombers of the 10th Battalion under Lieutenant Melville<sup>12</sup> had attacked the German post which, with great bravery and endurance, had so long held up the advance in the O.G. Lines. A Stokes mortar had fired intermittently on this post throughout the night, ending with two minutes' bombardment as fast as the gun could be loaded. Lieutenants Melville and Hillier<sup>13</sup> with their men rushed the

<sup>11</sup> See *Vol. I, 1st edn., p. 549.*

<sup>12</sup> Lieut. P. G. Melville, 10th Bn. Mine manager and prospector; b. 3 March, 1880.

<sup>13</sup> Lieut. R. J. B. Hillier, 10th Bn. Of Adelaide; b. 30 May, 1894. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.

position immediately afterwards. The Germans, who were killed, were found to be occupying part of a communication trench, about four feet in depth, which ran obliquely from one O.G. line to the other in almost direct continuation of Munster Alley. It was the same trench, in fact, whose junction had been temporarily seized by the 9th in the first attack on July 23rd, but which had not since been attained. This the 10th now occupied. Munster Alley itself was again being attacked by the 1st British Division,<sup>14</sup> the artillery of the 23rd Division covering the assault with a heavy bombardment. The 1st South Wales Borderers



reached a sector of the trench; but heavy machine-gun fire from the direction of the O.G. Lines near Pozières windwill held up the main effort and the Borderers were forced back with a loss of 9 of their 12 officers who took part and 74 other ranks. There was consequently no sign of the support expected by the Australians from that quarter, but the bombing platoon of the 5th under Lieutenant Fitzgerald<sup>15</sup> had duly stationed itself to guard that flank against attack.

At 2.45 the troops in the front line in O.G.2 observed German flares rising from O.G.1 behind them at a point near the railway. Flashes of rifles could be seen there; shortly afterwards bombing was heard, and German egg-bombs—small missiles with a feeble explosion, but which could be thrown a long distance—were seen bursting. As only some forty "moppers-up"<sup>16</sup> had remained in O.G.1, Lillie sent thither the bombing officer, Fitzgerald, who took such company-bombers as he could gather.<sup>17</sup> Some time afterwards

<sup>14</sup> The assault on this occasion was delivered by part of the 3rd British Brigade, which arranged the details by direct communication with its neighbour, the 3rd Australian Brigade.

<sup>15</sup> Lieut. L. E. J. Fitzgerald, 5th Bn. Public servant; of Abbotsford, Vic.; b. Brunswick, Vic., 17 April, 1894. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.

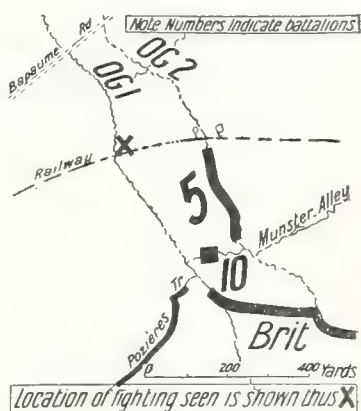
<sup>16</sup> Men detailed to subdue any of the enemy remaining in a captured position.

<sup>17</sup> Fitzgerald left the regimental bombers under his sergeant at Munster Alley.



a message came from Fitzgerald asking for more bombs and sandbags, and Lillie at once sent back from O.G.2 as many of each as were to hand.

The position on the left was indeed precarious. North of the railway Sutherland's platoon of the 7th—the only one to arrive at its starting point—had failed to get in.<sup>18</sup> The bombers of the 7th, who should have guarded that flank, were not there. Sheltered by the low railway bank between O.G. 1 and 2 lay a German post, in front of which Lead-beater, revolver in hand, waving



his men to the assault, had been killed. The Lewis-gun officer of the 5th, Lieutenant McMullen,<sup>19</sup> though wounded, hurried thither to organise a bombing attack upon these Germans, but was killed while leading it. The enemy had then begun to force his way down O.G.1, where a mere handful of men opposed him. Lillie therefore sent one of his officers, Lieutenant Carter,<sup>20</sup> to Colonel Le Maistre, whose headquarters were only five minutes distant,<sup>21</sup> with instructions to explain the situation personally, and to ask for reinforcements. Carter returned with the reply that no more assistance was available for O.G.1, and that, if the trench was not yet clear, Lillie must decide whether to hold on in O.G.2 or to evacuate it and retake O.G.1.

Lillie's mind was at once made up. German flares were rising from Munster Alley on his right front, and under them the helmets of the enemy could be seen along that trench. There was the utmost danger of being caught between these Germans and those attacking in O.G.1. On his journey

<sup>18</sup> It had been checked in front of O.G.1 in a hopeless position from which Sutherland withdrew it about daylight.

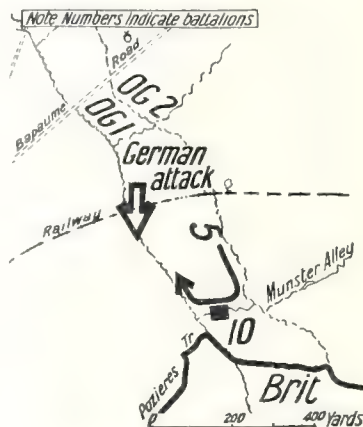
<sup>19</sup> Lieut. S. W. McMullen, 5th Bn. Commercial traveller; of North Fitzroy, Vic.; b. Mathinna, Tas., 3 Jan., 1897. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.

<sup>20</sup> Capt. A. V. Carter, M.C., M.M.; 5th Bn. Bank clerk; of Horsham, Vic.; b. Horsham, 22 March, 1893.

<sup>21</sup> At the junction of Pozieres Trench and O.G.1.

Lieutenant Carter had learnt of the existence of the communication trench between O.G.1 and O.G.2 then held by the 10th; and Lillie now simply ordered the men along O.G.2 to "right-turn" and wheel to the right along this communication trench into O.G.1. The southern half of that garrison had been digging with little interference from the enemy; but the northern half of O.G.2 was left crowded with dead and dying.<sup>22</sup>

The decision to evacuate O.G.2 came as a shock to the higher commanders, who had no previous information of the danger,<sup>23</sup> but the withdrawal was effected none too soon. The enemy's endeavour to retake his ground in O.G.1 led to one of the most desperate bomb-fights in the history of the A.I.F. The range of the German bombers was greater than that of the Australians, and Fitzgerald, dashing with his bombers across the open in order to remedy this disadvantage, was killed by a machine-gun; Lieutenants Gray (who had laid the tape) and Beveridge<sup>24</sup> were killed, and all but one of the regimental bombers of the 5th were either killed or wounded. The Germans forced their way down O.G.1 to the mouth of the communication trench leading to Munster Alley, and the party of the 10th in their captured strong-point between O.G. 1 and 2 were at



<sup>22</sup> A Lewis gun had been established on the left but was found smashed with bombs, its crew lying round it, killed or wounded.

Shortly after this withdrawal two figures—a short man in an overcoat and a tall man without one—were seen coming from O.G.2 into the Australian position, then in O.G.1. They were immediately covered by rifles, but the short man spoke: "It's all right—I've got a bastard here, and he's an officer, too!" Needless to say the speaker was recognised as an Australian soldier. He was a corporal of Leadbeater's company, and, catching sight of the big German, had chased and caught him. One or more of the Australian wounded in O.G.2 were eventually captured by the Germans. In the afternoon it was realised that the protective barrage must be falling on these men, and the guns were at 4 p.m. stopped at the request of General Walker.

<sup>23</sup> The contact aeroplane flew over at dawn, very low down, the pilot waving his arm to the 5th Battalion below; but the machine was immediately afterwards shot down in the German area. The history of the German 157th I.R. states that it was brought down by Lieutenant Seydel of that regiment, himself working a machine-gun.

<sup>24</sup> Lieut. F. R. Beveridge, 5th Bn. Insurance clerk; of North Fitzroy, Vic.; b. North Fitzroy, 25 Jan., 1896. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.

one time almost cut off, Lieutenant Inglis<sup>25</sup> being hit through the mouth in leading a counter-attack. MacLagan reinforced the 5th with all of the 9th and 10th that was available and, finally, with his last reserve—the two rear companies of the 7th. Two platoons of pioneers, who had been sent to consolidate O.G.1, found the front posts driven back upon them. One of their officers, Lieutenant Titford,<sup>26</sup> took charge, and, with his colleague, Lieutenant Foulsum, and Sergeants Olley,<sup>27</sup> Gardiner,<sup>28</sup> and others built a barricade and held the trench. Both officers were soon wounded by bombs, but the post was held, Titford being relieved by Lieutenant Martyn<sup>29</sup> of the same battalion. The *liaison* officers of the supporting artillery brigade, Lieutenants Oliver<sup>30</sup> and Bromilow,<sup>31</sup> had to turn to carrying bombs, and, when the Stokes mortar detachments were out of action, they took charge of those weapons, Lieutenant Oliver being severely wounded while so doing. Since the holding of the trench depended on maintaining the bomb-supply, a large proportion of the reinforcements were employed in forwarding bombs as fast as they could carry them.

It was bombs at the double—machine-guns at the double—carriers at the double—more bombs at the double—strings of men going up  
 . . . <sup>32</sup>

At the barricades, the surviving bombers threw until their arms gave way. To cover them, riflemen and Lewis gunners of the 5th, 9th, and 10th, firing from the cross-trench near Munster Alley, were trying to prevent the enemy bombers from looking over the top, and even cutting off with their bullets the hands of the throwers as they appeared over the parapet. To get within range the Australian bombers jumped over into shell-holes beside the trench, and, to make

<sup>25</sup> Capt. E. M. Inglis, M.C.; 10th Bn. Clerk; of Berri, S. Aust.; b. Roseworthy, S. Aust., 19 Aug., 1893.

<sup>26</sup> Lieut. R. A. Titford, M.C., M.M.; 1st Pioneer Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, 21 Nov., 1888.

<sup>27</sup> Lieut. A. A. J. Olley, M.C., D.C.M.; 1st Pioneer Bn. Electrician; of Yarrawonga, Vic.; b. Yarrawonga, 1893.

<sup>28</sup> C.S.M. T. W. Gardiner, M.M. (No. 37704, 1st Pioneer Bn.). Implement fitter; of Spotswood, Vic.; b. Mount Gambier, S. Aust., March, 1885.

<sup>29</sup> Lieut. P. M. Martyn, M.C.; 1st Pioneer Bn. Station manager; of Armidale, N.S.W.; b. Armidale, 11 June, 1892. Died of illness, 10 May, 1918.

<sup>30</sup> Lieut. B. E. Oliver, 1st A.F.A. Bde. Orchardist; of Horsham, Vic.; b. Hornsey, London, Eng., 1891. Died of wounds, 14 Aug., 1916.

<sup>31</sup> Lieut. I. C. Bromilow, 1st A.F.A. Bde. Audit clerk; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Kyneton, Vic., 29 Nov., 1894. Died of wounds, 7 Nov., 1916.

<sup>32</sup> From the diary of an Australian.

a better throw, sometimes dashed across the open. Seeing a German bolting, one boy of the 10th, regardless of consequences, ran after him until he was within range and then hit him between the shoulders with a bomb aimed like a cricket ball. In the middle of the fight (says an officer) a sergeant,<sup>33</sup> stripped to the waist, threw bombs for an hour with German grenades bursting all round him. One of these missiles seemed to explode almost on his chest, but he took no heed. His body covered with blood, he led the fight until he was forced to drop out through sheer exhaustion. Private Pennycuick<sup>34</sup> and others frequently stood on the parapet to fling their missiles; a Lewis gunner, Skilbeck,<sup>35</sup> ran forward to the flank of the bombing party and fired from a shell-hole, at critical moments running to the side of the trench and holding the gun to his shoulder like a rifle. These brave tactics involved the loss of many lives through enemy sniping. The struggle swayed backwards and forwards over some forty yards near the head of the cross-trench. About 7.30 Captain Oates<sup>36</sup> of the 7th arrived with three platoons of his battalion, and drove the Germans again almost to the railway. He was forced back to a rear barricade near the cross-trench, but, attacking again with a few men, held the position gained while the pioneers consolidated it by building new barricades.<sup>37</sup> Finally a barrier was established about half-way between the cross-trench and the railway, two men with bayonets keeping guard ahead at the next turn of the trench while the pioneers made the



<sup>33</sup> Said to be "Sergeant Hart of the 5th." He cannot, however, be identified.

<sup>34</sup> Pte. W. B. Pennycuick (No. 2662, 5th Bn.). Farmer; of Yinnar, Vic.; b. Yinnar, 15 May, 1887. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.

<sup>35</sup> Pte. J. R. Skilbeck, M.M. (No. 1197, 5th Bn.). Farm labourer; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Bendigo, 1890.

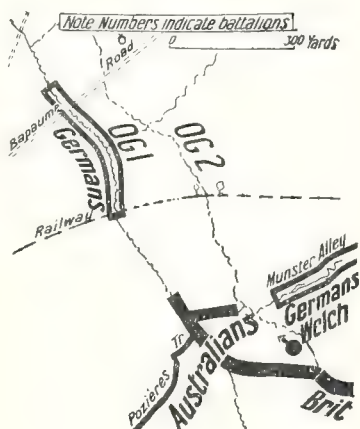
<sup>36</sup> Capt. A. Oates, D.S.O.; 7th Bn. Bricklayer; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 20 Feb., 1889.

<sup>37</sup> At various times Oates was assisted by Lieut. J. F. Bowtell-Harris (of Essendon, Vic.), 7th Bn., Lieut. J. A. Anderson (of Hawthorn, Vic.), 5th Bn., and others.



"block" and cut a small T-head sap to facilitate bombing from left or right of it. There was now an ample supply of bombs, and a Stokes mortar, getting the range of the railway, fired as fast as its crew could load. The enemy's effort was at last spent, and the Australians thus secured O.G.1 nearly to the railway<sup>38</sup> and the communication trench leading to the head of Munster Alley—in all about a fourth of the intended objective. The easternmost post in this cross-trench was practically at the junction of Munster Alley with O.G.2. This fact was not generally known, and, as a consequence, the 2nd Welch Regiment (3rd British Brigade) was ordered to sap forward some distance, as O.G.2 was there untraceable, and seize the junction. The Welch, making their way over the shell-holes, found the position already occupied by Australian infantry.<sup>39</sup>

German narratives show that, by a chance fortunate for himself, the enemy had ready on the spot a body of fresh troops well supplied with bombs with which to counter the 5th Battalion's attack. It has been mentioned that General Wellmann was putting the 86th R.I.R. into the line for his main operation (to take place that afternoon). The 86th chose its II Battalion for this purpose, and the two front-line companies of the battalion had just entered their allotted sector of the O.G. Lines at 3 a.m.,<sup>40</sup> when to their astonishment they discovered that the portion of that sector south of the railway was in possession of the Australians. These had driven out the 9th and 10th companies of the 62nd I.R. (then very weak), and were on the flank—and almost in rear of the nearest company of the II/27th holding the O.G. Lines. The southern company of the II/86th R.I.R. immediately counter-attacked with bombs, of which it had brought in its proper supply. There followed the furious fight in O.G.1, the



<sup>38</sup> The forward barricade appears to have been given up later, the Australians holding the rear barricade and leaving the trench vacant for 200 yards north of it. Patrols, however, were occasionally sent along it. The German accounts, also, lay claim to this portion, which, they say, was denied to the Australians by machine-gun fire. It was, however, also denied to the Germans.

<sup>39</sup> The true junction of Munster Alley and O.G.2 was twenty yards farther east.

<sup>40</sup> Relieving the 1st company of the 157th I.R., the II Battalion of the 27th I.R., and the 9th company of the 62nd I.R.

Australian side of which has been told. "The enemy fought stubbornly," says the historian of the 86th. The Germans used their heavy machine-guns on the parapet, placing them there for a few seconds and withdrawing them before they could be shot through. The company commander, Lieutenant Schmidt, was wounded in the head, but Lieutenant Zentner and other juniors led the bombing, Zentner being eventually killed. Captain Schweers, a hero of the Battalion, was also killed as he sat exposed on the parapet, sniping at the Australian trench-mortar crews. The company suffered considerable loss, and in the end, through the using up of men and bombs, was hard put to it to hold its own. The fate of other companies sent to its support will be told later. Eventually a good part of the lost trench, but not the whole, was regained—or at least denied to the Australians by machine-gun fire.

The I Battalion of a sister regiment, the 84th R.I.R., had during the same night, in circumstances of great difficulty, taken over the line in and east of Munster Alley, which thus also had been manned by fresh troops. It was these who drove off the British attack.

It remains to tell of the northern wing of the Australian attack and of the operations of the 12th Battalion east of Pozières, by which it was intended to connect the two. As the O.G. Lines north of the railway had not even been attacked, the task of the 12th—to link that position with Pozières village by establishing a line along the road—was impossible. The detachment of the 5th Field Company under Major Henderson,<sup>41</sup> which was to construct a strong-point at the road-junction east of Pozières,<sup>42</sup> had earlier been guided to the spot by Lieutenant Laing of the 12th, who had led out and stationed a covering party—thirty of the 12th under Lieutenant Heritage.<sup>43</sup> Laing, taking with him a private named Keeling,<sup>44</sup> then reconnoitred the intended position of the 12th, creeping forward until he could hear the voices of the Germans in the O.G. Lines. On returning, he led out the front line companies and stationed them along the nearer part of their objective. He had set them in position with orders to "dig like hell," when, as he afterwards wrote, "hell broke loose." A red flare shot up and fell fairly into the trench that the 12th were digging. There followed rocket after rocket. It seems almost certain that the 12th was

<sup>41</sup> Col. W. A. Henderson, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 1st Pioneer Bn., 1917/18. C.R.E., 1st Aust. Div., 1918. Architect; of Melbourne; b. Richmond, Vic., 28 Nov., 1882.

<sup>42</sup> See lower sketch on p. 550.

<sup>43</sup> Lieut. A. A. Heritage, M.C.; 12th Bn. Bank clerk; of Launceston, Tas., b. Longford, Tas., 13 Dec., 1888.

<sup>44</sup> C.S.M. A. Keeling, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 1767, 12th Bn.). Hewer; of Sydney; b. Sydney, 1881.

caught in the storm of fire which followed the attack by the 5th and 7th close to its right. A whirlwind of rifle, machine-gun, and artillery fire swept the area from front, left, and right. His troops being quite isolated, Laing after half-an-hour passed them the order to withdraw a few at a time. They did so, losing heavily; of the covering party, less than half returned. Laing sent word to the remainder of his battalion not to come out.<sup>45</sup>



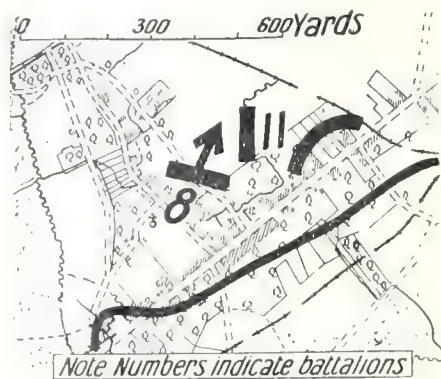
This bombardment had shattered the line digging east of the village. The next battalion to the west, the 11th, was to co-operate with the northward attack, which would take place on its left, at 3.30. During the first part of the night the 11th had been cleaning out an old German trench in the ruins north of the main road, endeavouring to connect with the 8th, whom it understood to be on its left. While thus occupied its front-line troops had, at about 1 a.m., received the order to advance. They had observed that during the past night no flares had been going up from the artillery dugouts beyond the northern hedge,<sup>46</sup> and they now occupied these without opposition; but, before advancing beyond them, they were heavily fired on by a body of men approaching from the west.

<sup>45</sup> Laing himself waited until his last man was clear. On his way in he passed a wounded man and promised to return for him. He accordingly took out Corporal F. E. Priddey and Privates L. R. T. Hassen, H. W. Love, and T. A. Lister with a heavy German stretcher, led them to the man, and set them on their way towards the Australian lines while he and Priddey searched for others. He found, however, only the dead lying thickly in the trench which they had been digging. After collecting their identity discs and paybooks, he returned to the lines, but learned that the men with the stretcher had not yet arrived. He and Priddey therefore went out again over all the ground, shouting "Stretcher-bearers!" They afterwards discovered that the bearers had lost their way and wandered into the Germans, who bombed them. Hassen alone got back. "I am very much to blame," wrote Laing, "for not guiding them in." A braver night's work is, however, not recorded in the history of the A.I.F. (Priddey belonged to Parkville, Vic., Hassen to Lidcombe, N.S.W., Love to Bristol, Eng., and Lister to South Kyogle, N.S.W.).

<sup>46</sup> The Germans appear to have withdrawn from these on July 24, fearing that they would be cut off by an Australian advance. Nine of the enemy who had been left behind in the neighbourhood were captured by Lieut. R. F. Bulkeley (of Wallerawang, N.S.W.), intelligence officer of the 3rd Battalion, and a small patrol about 10 a.m. on July 25.

They replied to this fire, but Lieutenant Le Nay, Lewis-gun officer, was convinced that the attacking troops were the 8th Battalion, who, he presumed, must be making a simultaneous advance.

As the light increased, he discerned on their arms the red and white badge of that unit. At the same time the oncoming troops, who formed the right flank of the 8th, recognised the mistake, and fire ceased abruptly. The trench containing the artillery



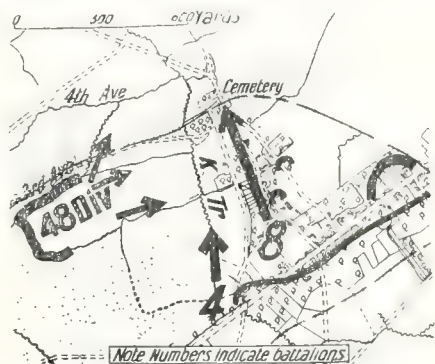
dugouts was practically on the line laid down by orders as the inner boundary of the two brigades;<sup>47</sup> but the company officers of the 8th had received no information that the 11th would be attacking it, nor had those of the 11th heard of the proposed advance by the 8th. As it was now daylight, a further advance across the open to the railway in face of the Germans in O.G.I was out of the question. The artillery trench was therefore handed over to the 8th, and the 11th retired to its earlier trench behind the hedge.

The plan of the northward attack, in which the 8th was engaged, was that the 8th (supported, if necessary, by the 3rd) should advance beyond the village, and, with the assistance of pioneers, form posts beyond the cemetery to the north, and in the open space between the village and the O.G. Lines to the north-east. At the same time the 4th Battalion was to bomb forward up "K" Trench. Gough was insistent that the Australians should reach not only the junction of that trench with Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben), but also its junction with Fourth Avenue (the German "Ganter Weg") beyond the cemetery, and thus cut off the retreat of the Germans whom the 48th Division would be attacking in those trenches farther west.

<sup>47</sup> Actually, it was within the boundary of the 3rd Brigade. The fact that in this fight the front-line troops were so often unaware of details of orders was largely due to the difficulty of communication caused by the bombardment.



These plans, as was usual during hurried operations, had been telegraphed in outline from divisional headquarters so that the brigadiers might make their provisional arrangements without waiting for the complete written order that followed later—sometimes, indeed, too late for its instructions to be fully carried out. Early in the evening Smyth had explained the plans to his battalion commanders, and,



while he was doing so, received the written order which, he then noted, fixed "July 26th" as the date of the attack. He had therefore dismissed the battalion commanders. Just before midnight he happened to consult the 3rd Brigade, and then learned that the date in the divisional order was a mistake which had been corrected<sup>48</sup> two hours previously in a message that Smyth evidently had not received.

Messengers were sent hurriedly to recall the battalion commanders. Those of the 2nd and 3rd could not be found, but those of the 4th, 8th, and 1st shortly after 1 a.m. received Smyth's dictated order, and hurried to their battalions. The two support-companies of the 8th, which were to advance through the village, were brought up to the south-western end of Pozières, and their commanders were instructed to communicate their orders to the front-line companies through which they would have to pass, and which were to move forward supporting the attack. Meanwhile the 4th Battalion was marched to the southern end of "K" Trench, Colonel Mackay meeting his company commanders near the Bapaume road and dictating his orders while the other officers withdrew the battalion from its trenches and brought it round. The bombardment opened at 3.30 a.m.<sup>49</sup> and lifted at 3.45; but

<sup>48</sup> The correction ran: "Reference Divisional order 37 para. 1 for 'morning of 26th' read 'morning of 25th.'" Smyth heard of this at 11.55 p.m.

<sup>49</sup> The barrage north of Pozières was laid down by the artillery of the 25th Division and was to progress by several stages. It lay on a line through the cemetery (and due east and west of that point) until 3.45. At 3.45 it shifted to a parallel line 100 yards farther north, and at 4.30 was raised another 100 yards, allowing the infantry to advance. The obvious need for protecting the infantry was thus gradually resulting in the development of the "creeping barrage."

owing to the delay caused by the mistake with regard to the date, it was 3.55 when the leading companies of the 4th under Major Brown, headed by the bombing platoon under Lieutenant Boileau<sup>50</sup> and three Lewis guns under Lieutenant Cooke,<sup>51</sup> and the company bombers, began their advance up the winding thoroughfare of "K" from the 2nd Battalion's barricade. The trench here was about five feet in depth, with brown earthen walls. The Germans waited quietly behind their barricade, and the first intimation of their position received by the Australian bombers was the sudden bursting of about half-a-dozen stick-bombs, which killed or wounded several and caused a momentary scatter. Boileau and Sergeant Baxter,<sup>52</sup> however, rallied the men and began steadily to bomb the enemy. Germans farther along the trench hampered the bombers by sniping over distant traverses. To check this and prevent the German bombers from jumping up to look where they threw, the Lewis gunners in rear of the bombers mounted their weapons on the sides of the trench and directed their fire ahead of the attack. By this time the two leading companies of the 8th were fast advancing through the village in extended lines, intentionally keeping some distance east of "K" Trench. The Germans who could be seen in short cross-trenches off "K," facing the 4th, were too busily engaged to heed this advance, which swept swiftly past their flank. Traill's company of the 8th,<sup>53</sup> now under Lieutenant Fay,<sup>54</sup> followed some distance in rear, keeping pace with the 4th Battalion's bombers, who were not difficult to locate, since both they and the Lewis gunners were now advancing in the open, along the parapets. The Germans in the cross-trenches leading from "K" stubbornly resisted Fay's company. He was wounded, and his place taken by Captain Lodge,<sup>55</sup> the adjutant. But, on the left, the Lewis gunners of the company, firing at the Germans in front of the 4th, greatly helped the progress of the bombers, and the

<sup>50</sup> Capt. C. M. Boileau, M.C.; 4th Bn. Accountant; b. Kempsey, N.S.W., 1888.

<sup>51</sup> Capt. W. L. Cooke, M.C.; 4th Bn. Grazier; of Korumburra, Vic.; b. Hamilton, Vic., 24 June, 1892.

<sup>52</sup> Sgt. R. M. Baxter, D.C.M. (No. 2564, 4th Bn.). Restaurant keeper; of Sydney; b. Lindley Wood, Yorks., Eng., 1875.

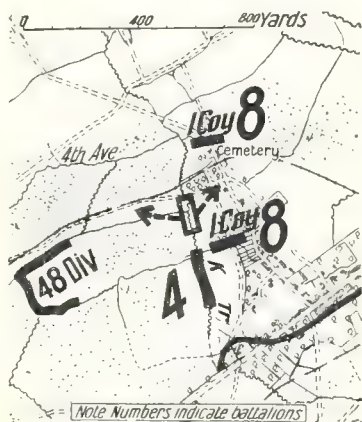
<sup>53</sup> This company had been holding the advanced post north of the church.

<sup>54</sup> Capt. L. P. Fay, M.C.; No. 4 Sqdn., Aust. Flying Corps. Bank clerk; of Melbourne; b. Middle Creek, Vic., 17 Sept., 1894.

<sup>55</sup> Capt. A. B. Lodge, D.S.O.; 8th Bn. Contractor; of Hamilton, Vic.; b. Hamilton, 1 Aug., 1895.

enemy retirement in "K" became faster and faster. The Germans had to pass through several wrecked and shallow trench-bays, in which the gunners caught them. The bombers were now picking up numbers of grenades left behind by the enemy<sup>56</sup> and raining them on the retreating Germans. The 8th took the cross-trenches, and presently a hundred yards along the trench ahead the enemy could be heard crying "Kamerad (comrade)! Mercy Kamerad!"—signifying his wish to surrender.

What had happened was this: the left front company of the 8th had got clear of all the ruins along the road towards Thiepval, passed the cemetery (a small hedged enclosure with stone vaults and ironwork crosses), and reached a point fifty yards beyond it. The company was thus in direct rear of the Germans retreating along "K," numbers of whom, finding their way barred, tried to surrender. The men of the 8th, however, having the impression that the presence of several hundred prisoners in their advanced position would be dangerous, continued to fire. The Germans then broke, streaming across country from either side of the trench, on the one side towards their support positions beyond Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben), on the other to the O.G. Lines. A number were shot down, but a large proportion, scrambling from shell-hole to shell-hole, escaped.<sup>57</sup> The 4th Battalion continued along "K" and presently met the 8th at the cemetery. Ahead, the trench was then unoccupied, and Sergeant-Major Goodwin<sup>58</sup> of the 8th pushed along it northwards for a mile<sup>59</sup> until, coming over a second rise, he beheld close in front the ruined walls and broken trees of Mouquet Farm. "K" Trench was deep in mud, and evidently unused



<sup>56</sup> As well as the early morning coffee and rum left by the Germans.

<sup>57</sup> Fifty had been killed in "K" Trench, and ten prisoners and two machine-guns taken.

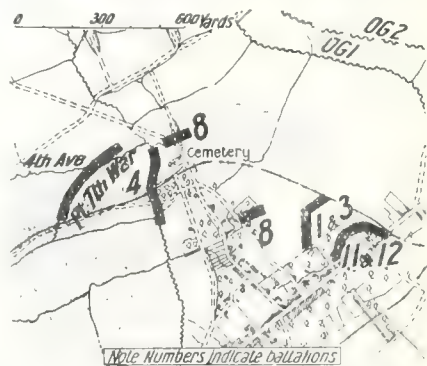
<sup>58</sup> Lieut. F. W. Goodwin, M.C.; 8th Bn. Farmer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Colwall, Herefordshire, Eng., 6 Jan., 1886. Killed in action, 4 Oct., 1917.

<sup>59</sup> Goodwin saw only one German, at whom he fired; the man bolted and Goodwin could not catch him.



except as an occasional avenue for communication. Although Goodwin was not then aware of the fact, the Germans still held in force the cross-trenches leading from "K" to the west, facing the 48th Division. A patrol of the 4th under Sergeant Costin,<sup>60</sup> moving down the southern branch of Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben), after surprising a few Germans, who ran, came upon a sector strongly garrisoned. The 7th Warwicks had not attacked it, being prevented by a barrage from reaching their intended starting-point.<sup>61</sup> An attempt at midday failed.<sup>62</sup> At dusk, upon orders that the German posts holding up the battalion must be taken at all costs, the 7th Warwicks seized Third Avenue (Schwarzwaldgraben), three parties descending on it simultaneously from different directions.<sup>63</sup> Thus the 48th and 1st Australian Divisions at last gained touch with each other in the forward area; but a post of the enemy in his next trench—Fourth Avenue (Ganter Weg), which ran into "K" beyond the cemetery—still separated the most advanced posts. It was not until 4 a.m. on July 26th that the 4th Battalion in "K"<sup>64</sup> saw British troops close to their left front in Fourth Avenue, and Major Stacy<sup>65</sup> walked down that trench and met them. They proved to be the 7th Warwicks. The 8th Warwicks, relieving them, afterwards bombed up another 200 yards of "K," but were counter-attacked and driven back to the junction of Fourth Avenue.

The right front company of the 8th, in pushing through Pozières, met with



<sup>60</sup> Lieut. E. B. Costin, M.M.; 4th Bn. Station manager; of Woollahra, N.S.W.; b. Strathfield, N.S.W., 1891. Died of wounds, 8 May, 1917.

<sup>61</sup> This barrage was laid down by the enemy in consequence of another British bombing attack farther west. Lieut. A. P. C. Loveitt (of Coventry, Eng.), 7th Warwicks, reconnoitred the intended area of attack and was shot dead while doing so.

<sup>62</sup> This was organised by Major F. S. Hanson (mining engineer; of Coventry, Eng.), of the 7th Warwicks, it being arranged that a bombing party should attack under cover of fire from two Stokes mortars. One of the mortars, however, shifted its base in the soft ground, and disorganised the effort by firing short into the bombing party, killing or wounding seventeen men.

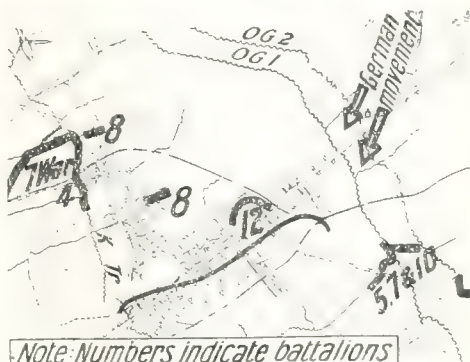
<sup>63</sup> One was guided from "K" by a patrol of the 4th Battalion that joined in the fight. <sup>64</sup> "K" Trench had then been cleaned out and deepened, largely by a party of the 1st Pioneers under Lieut. Carl Speckman (of Paddington, N.S.W.).

<sup>65</sup> Lieut.-Col. B. V. Stacy, C.M.G., D.S.O. Commanded 1st Bn., 1917/19. Solicitor; of Sydney; b. Mudjee, N.S.W., 7 Dec., 1886.



heavy fire and lost three officers,<sup>66</sup> but reached the post already held in the orchard, where a party of the 1st Pioneer at once began to dig a redoubt. Thus in each sector the foremost Australian posts now lay beyond Pozieres, but the intended positions between the village and the O.G. Lines had not yet been occupied. About 7.15 the enemy guns opened heavily, this time shelling the whole village. By 8 o'clock the bombardment was so severe that Captain Vowles of the 12th, in the Tramway Trench on the eastern outskirts of Pozieres, withdrew most of his men into the "Medical Dugout." Others were sent back to trenches in rear.<sup>67</sup>

At 8.15, while the bombardment continued, large numbers of the enemy were seen advancing southwards on the crest near Pozieres windmill. This movement was observed from many parts of the Australian front, and was interpreted as an attempt to counter-attack. It was almost immediately met by the fire of Australian machine-guns east of the village and in Black Watch Alley, and by a heavy barrage which the artillery of the 1st Australian and 23rd British Divisions, informed by numerous messages, laid down south of the Bapaume road. The German infantry at once changed direction westwards.



<sup>66</sup> Small parties of Germans, possibly scattered by this day's fighting, remained between the 8th and O.G.L. Lieut. W. A. Taylor (a clergyman, of Warrnambool, Vic.), of the company which reached the orchard on the night of July 23, was scouting ("prodding about," as one account states) with one companion towards the German positions, when he came suddenly upon a German officer and ten men. Taylor, a keen, bold officer, at once covered the officer and ordered him to surrender. The German seemed to be about to do so, when he observed the numerical weakness of his enemy. He turned and ran, whereupon Taylor at once shot him, and turned to deal with the other ten. Unlike the Germans of the last year of the war, some of them kept their heads and, firing upon Taylor, killed him.

Another brave soldier of the same battalion killed on this day was one of its Lewis gunners, Pte. Thomas Cooke (of Wellington, N.Z., and Richmond, Vic.). He was ordered with his gun-team to a dangerous point, where he held out under heavy fire till all the rest were killed. When assistance was eventually sent to him, he was found dead beside his gun. For his gallantry he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

<sup>67</sup> This movement caused messages to be sent by a neighbouring Australian commander informing brigade headquarters that the 12th were retiring "badly shaken," giving the brigade staff the impression that the front line had been abandoned.

advancing intermittently in short rushes, in extended order. In this way a certain number reached the O.G. Lines near the windmill; others broke and ran to the rear.

The advancing Germans were not counter-attacking. German narratives make it clear that, through a succession of blunders and mischances, there were in progress behind the enemy's lines a series of needless movements, which resulted in disaster to almost the whole of the 86th R.I.R. The 18th Reserve Division was new to this battlefield, and, by way of preparation, its commander, on reaching Cambrai on July 21, had read to his regimental leaders von Below's order—that if they gave up a trench to the enemy they would be court-martialled. The 31st Reserve Brigade had subsequently been hurried to the support area, and the divisional staff to Haplincourt Château, in which it found itself crowded with the outgoing staffs and a number of important visitors. While General Wellmann, without adequate knowledge of the front, was wrestling with the arrangements for his counter-attack, to be made that afternoon, the fighting troops—for the most part out of touch with him—were involved in movement of which—in an account written after the war—he unconsciously shows that the truth had not even then reached him.

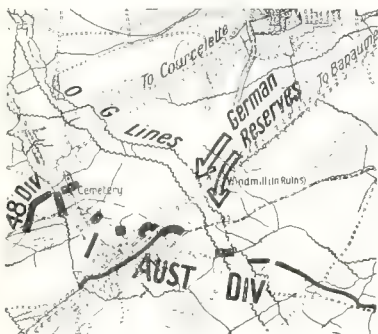
The Germans whom the Australians first observed moving on the windmill heights were supports called up to meet an apprehended attack. About 5 a.m. the sight of the northern wing of the Australian attack advancing through Pozières along "K" Trench caused an alarming report from the 157th Regiment to reach Captain Sieveking, the commander of the II Battalion of the 86th, who was with the support companies in rear of the O.G. Lines. An attack, it was said, was advancing "in thick columns" on the German right. The Germans were in constant apprehension of a serious attempt by the British to "break through," and Sieveking now ordered his two support companies (the 7th and 8th) to reinforce the two front-line companies which were still involved in resisting the earlier attack. He himself and his staff, advancing with the leading troops of the 7th company, succeeded in reaching the O.G. Lines; but the remainder of that company and the whole of the 8th, which followed, were caught by the machine-gun fire and the barrage, which immediately opened, and were shot to pieces. Of the 7th company only the commander, one junior officer, and nineteen men appear to have reached the trench. The 8th company, which followed, lost all its officers. Though survivors bravely continued to move forward by rushes, only remnants reached the line and there scattered themselves along the whole front of the sector. Some of the 7th company appear to have found themselves in Munster Alley. The casualties were caused chiefly by machine-gun fire, one enfilading gun (probably in Black Watch Alley) being particularly deadly.<sup>68</sup>

The II/86th R.I.R. had thus been devastated in an entirely needless advance. But the disaster did not end there. The main counter-attack against Pozières being then in contemplation, the 157th Regiment had ordered up the I Battalion of the 86th, which had been lent to it; and at 6 a.m. this battalion reached Courcellette. There—

<sup>68</sup> Though runners incurred extreme risks in carrying back reports of its position, the German artillery could not suppress this machine-gun.

as Courcellette would be in danger if the Australian advance was pressed—Major Hengstenberg, commanding the 157th, ordered it to take position in front of the south-western corner of the village. When, however, its leading company—the 1st—emerged from Courcellette into the sunken road leading south-westwards to the O.G. Lines, it was faced by the terrific barrage called down by the movement of the II Battalion, just related. The company commander saw that it was hopeless to advance or remain there, and his report to that effect caused the withdrawal to a little trench south of the village, where the company awaited the order—not yet to hand—for the main counter-attack. Shortly afterwards the 1st company was ordered to advance towards Pozières cemetery, with a view to counter-attacking there; but, on attempting to move from Courcellette over the open, it ran into such a storm of shell-fire that the attempt was, by leave, abandoned.

Meanwhile, about 8 o'clock, apparently by order of the division, the 3rd and 4th companies of the battalion had been allotted to support the II Battalion in its counter-attack on the Australians in the O.G. Lines, only the 1st and 2nd companies and headquarters being retained to assist the 157th. But the 2nd company, seeing the advancing companies of the II Battalion stopped near the windmill, went on to support them. Emerging from Courcellette, it met the barrage; but, moving in extended order, parts succeeded in reaching O.G.1 near the windmill, whereupon some were sent back to occupy the site of the obliterated O.G.2. The 3rd company came into close contact with the Australians south of the main road, and its losses, mainly through artillery and trench-mortar fire, are described as "extraordinarily high." After the company commander had been hit, his successor withdrew the troops about 200 yards to escape the worst of the barrage. A few of this company, also, found themselves in Munster Alley. The 4th company attempted to reinforce on the windmill crest, suffered heavy loss, and eventually made its way south of the Bapaume road into what was known as the "old third line trench."<sup>69</sup>



In the early morning the III Battalion of the same regiment, lying in reserve near Le Sars, about three miles down the main road, was alarmed and ordered to prevent a "break through", the intention apparently being that it should carry out this duty at Le Sars. The same nervousness that actuated his colleagues seems to have caused the battalion commander to hurry his companies towards the front. The 10th was sent ahead up the main road, the three others following in extended order south of the road. The 10th company reached the windmill heights, when the bombardment fell upon it and pinned it down slightly in rear of the troops of the other battalions. But the rear companies of the III Battalion had only just arrived at the

<sup>69</sup> *History of the 86th R.I.R.*, p. 126. These unlucky movements were partly due to an incorrect report, received before 7 a.m., that the O.G. Lines north of the Bapaume road were being attacked.



sunken cross-road between Martinpuich and Courcellette, when they came under heavy bombardment and sought shelter in the road. Here they were apparently found by British airmen, and the shell-fire directed upon the road became so severe that, after first attempting to dig into its banks, they lost all organisation, and were driven back over the open with heavy loss, to be eventually reorganised in a hollow north of the main road.

Thus all three battalions of the 86th R.I.R., brought up by different authorities to meet a threat which was never intended, suffered in one morning casualties which crippled this regiment during its first tour on the Somme.

In the meantime the northward advances of the Australian infantry, and its capture of the junctions of Second and Third Avenues (Schwarzwaldgraben) with "K" Trench, had completely cut off the 3rd and 4th companies of the I/157th, and endangered the communications of the II/157th in Fourth Avenue (Ganter Weg). Lieutenant Roske (commander of the 3/157th), who since the beginning of the battle on July 23 had held out in "K" Trench, was killed in that fighting, and the companies, finding themselves surrounded, tried to "cut their way through" to the 11th R.I.R.,<sup>70</sup> which some succeeded in reaching. The artillery preparation for the Australian attack seems to have in a great part levelled the old communication trench (now serving as a "switch") east of the orchard,<sup>71</sup> and to have shattered the reinforcing company of the II/157th, which was stationed there. A company of the 26th I.R. sent up to occupy part of a trench between Pozières and the O.G. Lines found that the Australians were in possession of it, "digging a jumping-off trench." The company was therefore withdrawn to the O.G. Lines.

To return to the Australian narrative. At 10 o'clock all movement of the Germans on the windmill heights had ceased, and the Australian batteries became silent; but the German fire on Pozières village remained intense. At this stage the 3rd Battalion, still south of the main road, was ordered to advance and connect the posts of the 8th along the northern edge of Pozières. Its commander, Colonel Owen Howell-Price, gave instructions to Captain Middleton<sup>72</sup> and Lieutenant Bartlett,<sup>73</sup> then acting in command of the companies that were to move. On their returning to their men, both were killed. Price himself went up, having only four

<sup>70</sup> *History of the 157th I.R.*, p. 33. Parts of the 1st, 2nd, 6th, and 8th companies of the 157th from Third Avenue escaped, but very few of the 3rd and 4th from "K" Trench. The plight of these Germans was not unlike that of the 8th Australian Infantry Brigade in the Battle of Fromelles (see pp. 424-5), and of the 4th and 12th Brigades at Bullecourt. It is obvious that an attempt to escape appears to one side as "bolting across country"—although it may often justly be described by the other as an effort to "cut a way through."

<sup>71</sup> Later known as "Centre Way."

<sup>72</sup> Capt. R. O. Middleton, 3rd Bn. Architect; of Vacluse, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 1 June, 1891. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.

<sup>73</sup> Lieut. J. S. F. Bartlett, 3rd Bn. Chemist; of Morningside, Q'land, and Sydney; b. Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, 18 Nov., 1884. Killed in action, 25 July, 1916.



company officers left,<sup>74</sup> re-allotted the commands, and then, as the trenches south of the road were useless, and indeed barely traceable, led the remains of all four companies forward through a barrage of terrible density. He himself was twice thrown down by the blasts of explosions; but the village had been so pounded that the earth and débris were powdered, and the shell-bursts, though flinging up vast clouds, were to some extent smothered. By 10 o'clock the battalion was in touch with all posts of the 8th from the orchard to the artillery trench.<sup>75</sup>

The bombardment of July 25th was heavier than on the 24th, but the troops were more sheltered. The front-line battalions in "K" Trench and the orchard escaped the worst by pushing forward. Major Rowlands' company of the 2nd, still in the line at Gibraltar, was saved by the withdrawal of its men—about seventy in all—into the deep dugouts of that strong-point. At the other end of the village the remains of the two foremost companies of the 12th took cover in a concrete shelter at the old school-house and in the "Medical Dugout" near by. The ground above this dugout was blown to powder and two of its three entrances hit, several men being killed and the trench south of that point filled in; but most of the men were safe inside, while outside, as Lieutenant Laing afterwards said—"one shell merely filled up the hole the last shell made." The Lewis gunners of the 11th were also in dugouts and cellars, available to meet any attack, and the artillery trench afforded some shelter to parts of the 1st and 3rd Battalions. But Herrod's company of the 2nd north of the road,<sup>76</sup> and the support companies of the 12th, 11th, 1st, and 4th, south of it, were holding new-made trenches, without dugouts, and had to remain still all day and suffer the full force of this increased bombardment.

At about 10 a.m. the shell-fire eased for an interval, and again at 1 o'clock. By a fortunate chance, during the first of these intervals the 6th Battalion (2nd Brigade) which had been ordered to pass through Pozières and dig the trench-line

<sup>74</sup> Lieut. H. S. Chapman (of Murrurundi, N.S.W.) was at this stage first pinned down by falling timber and then killed by a shell-burst.

<sup>75</sup> Howell-Price wrote his report in the midst of the bombardment falling on this trench, the trench-wall being twice blown in on him while he was writing.

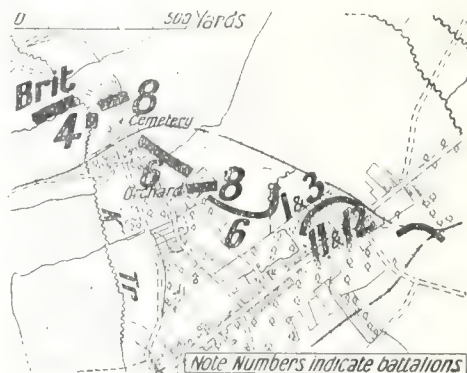
<sup>76</sup> Captain Cotton of this company was killed by a direct hit of a heavy shell.

on its northern edge, slipped through unharmed, except for its last platoon, under Lieutenant Samuel,<sup>77</sup> which was still passing up the Chalk Pit road when the bombardment again descended, causing the loss of this officer and more than half his men. The remainder of the battalion reached the front line and was strung out to dig from the cemetery to the orchard, and from the orchard to the hedge near the artillery dugouts. The

O.G. Lines, crowded with the enemy and practically undamaged north of the road, were only 500 to 600 yards away, and the line of men digging was in full view. Except for some sniping, however, the German infantry remained inactive after its experience in the

morning. The diggers were well within the area of the bombardment. Large numbers were wounded, especially N.C.O's, one company losing all its sergeants. Lieutenant Thompson<sup>78</sup> was mortally wounded, but Captain Binns, after pacing out the line, walked up and down the parapet all day. "Buried, were you?" he would remark cheerily to men who had been covered and dug out. "You were lucky you weren't hit!" When the shelling became intolerable, he led his men forward into shell-holes. By nightfall the connecting line had been dug to a depth of from five to seven feet—a work that gained the admiration of the other battalions holding the posts.<sup>79</sup>

That such a bombardment as Pozières was now receiving would fail to affect the progress of Gough's offensive can hardly have been expected. All day onlookers in that half of the battlefield watched the ragged trees, amid which clouds



<sup>77</sup> Capt. S. G. Samuel, 6th Bn. Farmer; of Boolarra, Vic.; b. Parkville, Vic., 1891.

<sup>78</sup> Lieut. J. R. Thompson, 6th Bn. School teacher; of Wedderburn, Vic.; b. Salisbury West, Vic., 1889. Died of wounds, 9 Aug., 1916.

<sup>79</sup> "The 6th Battalion," reported Price of the 3rd who watched in admiration, "did the work in splendid style."

raised by the German salvoes hour after hour spurted and rolled slowly skyward, to dissolve into a long streamer of dust visible for ten miles around. Colonel Elliott of the 12th, who fought with his battalion throughout the war, speaks of this as "a fateful day for the 12th," and describes the shell-fire as "the worst we ever suffered."

Later, we experienced many hurricane bombardments, lasting half-an-hour or more, of far greater intensity, but I do not remember any other so severe for such a long time. . . . In the evening, when I went up to arrange for our relief by the 19th Battalion, I could hardly find a trace of the trenches that had been so well dug the previous day.<sup>80</sup>

As this terrible trial continued, corps and divisional headquarters received several appeals from the infantry, who asked whether something could be done to check the German batteries inflicting this suffering, the severity of which was again stressed by messages from neighbouring army corps. Thus the heavy artillery of the II Corps reported:

8.45 a.m. Very intense bombardment of Pozzières reported. 12 Bn. Australians sent up S.O.S. signal.<sup>81</sup>

9.30 a.m. The bombardment reported continuing, particularly intense near the church.

The 1st Australian Field Artillery Brigade telegraphed at 9.50 a.m.:

Impossible for forward observing officer to see owing to smoke and dust.

The air patrol of II Corps reported at 2.17 and again at 2.43: Pozzières being heavily shelled.

About 4 p.m. Birdwood's artillery staff appealed to Reserve Army, but found that the counter-batteries of that army were already doing all they could. The Fourth Army was then asked to help; the heavy artillery of the Anzac Corps itself, which till 5 p.m. was firing on barrage or on the O.G. Lines, then turned the fire of its Australian battery<sup>82</sup> upon a group

<sup>80</sup> In *The Story of the 12th* by L. M. Newton, p. 224, Colonel Elliott adds: "The great majority of the 375 casualties (of the 12th Bn.) of this engagement were suffered on this day. One shell landed in 'C' Company Headquarters and killed Capt. P. D. Nicholas, Lieut. C. D. Lucas, and Company Sgt.-Major Small." In the same bombardment the 12th had Lieut. T. C. B. Moore severely wounded and five other officers shell-shocked, two of whom, Capt. J. A. Foster and Lieut. S. L. Hughes, had to be evacuated. (Nicholas, Lucas, and Moore belonged to Hobart, Tas.; Small to Moonee Ponds, Vic.; Foster to Merton Vale, Campbell Town, Tas.; and Hughes to Waratah, Tas.)

<sup>81</sup> This was at the time when the Germans were swarming forward near the windmill (see p. 575).

<sup>82</sup> The I Anzac Corps Heavy Artillery commander had control of the 45th Heavy Artillery Group, including the 36th, 55th, and 108th Siege Batteries. The 55th was an Australian battery of 9.2-inch howitzers.

of German artillery near Courceleste. The diarist of the 2nd Australian Field Artillery Brigade notes:

Haze all day. Not till 6.30 p.m. were our heavies able to get into action with satisfactory result. Then haze cleared and they opened at a heavy rate.

The British counter-battery fire was accurate, for it is now known that the 117th German Division alone had ten guns put out of action that day; but no abatement of the enemy's fire was observed by the infantry.

About 4.30 p.m. the situation had been such as to cause anxiety. MacLagan, commanding the 3rd Brigade, noted that he could not see the village for smoke. This terrific onslaught by the German artillery must have had some reason, and, if it meant attack, he had practically no reserve with which to meet contingencies. It is true that most of the infantry observed no movement of the enemy.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless about 4.30 p.m. artillery observers of the 23rd British and 1st Australian Divisions discerned numbers of Germans moving in the neighbourhood of the Bapaume road near the crest east of Pozières, apparently intending to counter-attack. The receipt of this news caused the local commanders some fear lest the position won that morning in O.G.I might be endangered, but Lieutenant Harris<sup>84</sup> of the 7th and his men at the barricade, though word of the attack reached them, could see nothing of it. The field artillery of the 1st Australian and 23rd Divisions, and the heavies of the II Corps, laid down a barrage on the crest; machine-guns in Black Watch Alley also opened, and the enemy's movement quickly ceased.<sup>85</sup>

It is now known that the bombardment under which the Australian infantry had been lying was in preparation for the main German counter-attack upon Pozières, which the 18th Reserve Division had arranged to launch at 4.30 p.m. The artillery of the 7th, 8th, and 117th Divisions—as well as such batteries of the IX Corps as were in position, and the southern batteries of the 26th Reserve Division—had been ordered to co-operate, the heavy artillery bombarding Pozières for four hours before the assault. The artillery plans had been worked out by General Stüve, specially lent by corps headquarters; but, although the concentration included, according to

<sup>83</sup> Colonel Roberts of the 11th informed MacLagan that he did not think the shelling presaged an attack. It is interesting to compare this opinion with that of the battalion commanders of the 2nd Brigade next day, that the shelling on July 26 *did* portend an attack (*see p. 590*). In both cases the judgment was wrong.

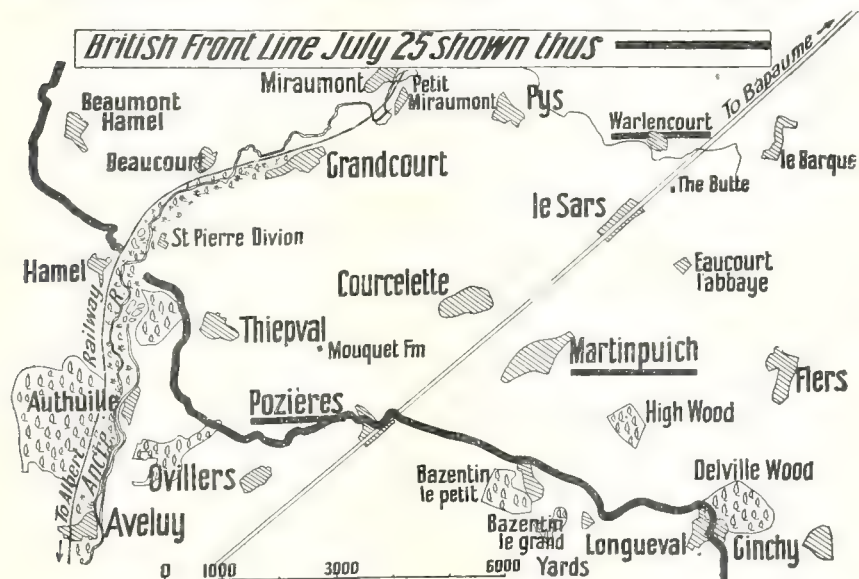
<sup>84</sup> Capt. J. F. Bowtell-Harris, M.C.; 7th Bn. Of Essendon, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 9 May, 1896.

<sup>85</sup> At 5.16 the 1st Field Artillery Brigade reported "Attack broken down." At 5.25—"Germans not left trench, but massing."



General Wellmann, "every battery, in the neighbouring sectors, within range," its effect was reduced—by absence of air-observation—to that of searching fire.

General Wellmann's order to the infantry had been issued late on July 24; but the commander and staff of the 86th R.I.R. had by then been moved forward to the headquarters of the 27th I.R. in Martinpuich to facilitate the relief. This village was about as far behind the German front as Contalmaison was behind the British front, but it was so bombarded that staff work there appears to have been almost impossible. The headquarters dugout was choked with wounded, and all telephone lines were cut. It was 2 a.m. on July 25 when the order for the counter-attack reached it. The conditions being



unendurable, the staff withdrew to Warlencourt, and there, though lacking clear information from any of its three battalions, drew up the detailed orders for the operation.

The assault of the 86th R.I.R. was to be made by its II Battalion, supported by the III, half a company of pioneers, and several flame-throwers. The I Battalion also, as it chanced, was being used by the 157th Regiment to help in carrying out that regiment's part in the operation. The assault would be delivered by three extended waves, each from one to two companies in strength, with attached *flammenwerfer* and machine-guns. At the last moment six companies of the 84th R.I.R. were attached to the 86th. This circumstance necessitated an alteration in the order. After it had been sent out, a further alteration had to be made through the action of General Wellmann:<sup>86</sup> in order to place the 157th and 86th R. under a single control, he obtained the staff of a sister brigade, the 81st (belonging to the 17th Reserve Division), and set it down at Warlencourt to direct the operation. In addition to this, by representing to his corps commander that Pozières, even if regained, would be untenable

<sup>86</sup> See General Wellmann's own account in his interesting book *Mit der 18 Reserve-Division in Frankreich*, p. 123.

through shell-fire, he obtained leave to change the objective to a line running through the centre of the village. If each side held part of the ruins, the British artillery, it was argued, would be unable freely to pound them. These changes made necessary the hurried despatch of further fresh orders to all the troops involved.

The original operation order of the 86th R.I.R. did not reach Captain Sieveking of the II Battalion, who was to carry it out, until just before 3 p.m. His battalion—or the part available—had by then shrunk to six officers and ninety men. He at once sent back a strong reply, stating that the assault could not be delivered; his troops, who had been fighting since 3 a.m., were too weak and disorganised, had no machine-guns or bombs left, and were with difficulty holding their own. This message did not reach regimental headquarters until 5.30, when it was already known there that, for some reason, the assault had not gone forward. Sieveking's report, however, was final. The operation order was countermanded. The fact was—though the regimental staff appears to have had little knowledge of it—that practically all the troops intended for the operation had been more or less shattered by the disasters of that morning. The III Battalion, which after bewildering alterations in its orders had arrived north of Courcellette, was informed of the cancellation. But the fact that British observers at 4.30 observed sufficient movement to cause them to report a counter-attack and call for a barrage makes it probable that some units had already attempted to carry out their parts in the operation. The regimental commander proceeded to draw up plans for another counter-attack to be delivered, after an hour's bombardment, at 8.30 p.m. It was to be made by the III/84th R.I.R., which had been allotted to him. This order was issued at 6.15.

Meanwhile the 157th, in attempting to carry out its share in the main counter-attack, had encountered difficulties quite as great. Its only troops for that purpose were now its own 9th company (formerly artillery-guard at Courcellette) and the 1st company of the 86th R.I.R.<sup>87</sup> Some weak remnants of the II/157th and of the 26th I.R. were forced to withdraw from the switches north of Pozières penetrated by the Australian attack, and, when the order for the attack finally came through, only ten minutes before "zero," the commander of the II/157th protested that there was no hope of success. The regimental commander had already made a similar representation to the brigade headquarters, which had passed it to General Wellmann. The protest was thoroughly well-justified—the attempt could only have ended in disaster—but it had not been sympathetically received. Silesians, of whom the 157th Regt. was formed, were not highly esteemed by the Prussians as fighters, and Wellmann had threatened the regimental commander with court-martial if he did not attack. The 157th accordingly arranged to launch the assault at the same time as the 86th R.I.R.—8.30 p.m.

Before that hour, however, the order was countermanded by General von Boehn, to whom it was now evident that Pozières could not be retaken without great expenditure of men and ammunition. In consequence of Sieveking's report, the III/84th was employed for the immediate relief of the II/86th, and, so far as the higher staff was concerned, all further notion of retaking the village was abandoned.

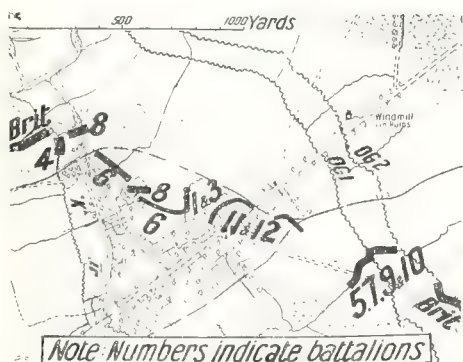
Thus ended the counter-effort against Pozières. Allowing for all the difficulties of the German staff, its blunders on this occasion were

<sup>87</sup> The 4th company, 86th R.I.R., was added, but arrived after the attack had been countermanded.

unsurpassed within the experience of the A.I.F. It is characteristic of Prussian justice that punishment fell on the commander of the 157th, who on July 30 was deprived of his command.

On the Australian side, the easing of the German bombardment at about 6 p.m. found the 1st and 3rd Brigades almost at the limit of their endurance. The 8th and 6th Battalions (of the 2nd Brigade), however, with their Lewis guns round the northern extension of the village, could have held off any attack in that area; and, farther west, portions of the 11th, 12th, 1st, and 3rd, partly sheltered from shell-fire in dugouts and cellars, could probably have put up a resistance far stronger than the staff believed possible.

In the "Medical Dug-out" at the eastern end of the village, the crowding of the wounded into the narrow galleries depressed the spirits of the small garrison; but, when the shell-fire slackened, Vowles sent each wounded man away in charge of two others whose duty, as soon as their charges were in safety, was to



return quickly to the dugout as best they could.<sup>88</sup> As soon as the maimed were cleared, the spirits of the garrison rose. They had been short of food, but water had reached them; and the arrival of some rum now put new life into them.

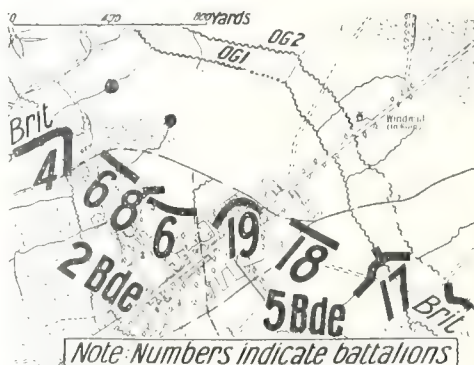
The need for relieving the 1st and 3rd Brigades was well recognised. All units of the reserve brigade—the 2nd—had already been thrown in, and the leading brigade of the 2nd Australian Division was in Sausage Gully.<sup>89</sup> It was now arranged that the battalions of the 2nd Brigade should be concentrated in the western half of the Corps front to relieve the 1st Brigade, while the 5th Brigade—temporarily under the

<sup>88</sup> The general order that unwounded men must not escort the wounded to the rear had necessarily to be broken in such cases in order to clear the trenches. It has been recorded that several men of the 12th who took the places of worn-out stretcher-bearers were killed. Private J. K. Yaxley (of Forth, Tas.) volunteered to carry one of the wounded who had been thus dropped, but, after picking the man up, he too was mortally wounded.

<sup>89</sup> It had been furnishing parties to carry rations and ammunition to the troops in the battle-line.



1st Divisional staff—relieved the 3rd in the right sector. The relief began that evening. The 8th and 6th Battalions of the 2nd Brigade, which were already holding the line north of Pozières, remained where they were; the 7th took the place of the 1st and 2nd in the support positions in "K" Trench and along the main road.<sup>90</sup> In the 3rd Brigade sector the 17th Battalion relieved the 9th in the O.G. Lines; the 19th relieved the 12th Battalion at the east end of Pozières; the 18th relieved the 10th between these two; and the 20th remained in reserve. The 1st Division had not captured the whole of the objective set for it—300 yards of the O.G. Lines south of the main road were still untaken, and the posts north-east of Pozières were not as far out as Gough had ordered. As a consequence, before dawn on the 26th a platoon of the 8th, with bombers and Lewis gunners, crawled forward in the latter area under the noses of the enemy in the O.G. Lines, stopping whenever a flare was sent up. Before daylight they had dug a few short sections of trench on either side of the German communication trench afterwards incorporated in the "Centre Way." Being only 300 yards from the heavily manned O.G. Lines, the troops were at day-break pinned to the ground and almost entirely isolated,<sup>91</sup> but succeeded in maintaining the post. Another party had been sent out to the more northerly communication trench later known as "Tom's Cut,"<sup>92</sup> but were accidentally attacked by a bombing party of the Warwicks,<sup>93</sup> and were withdrawn.



*The Northern Post was withdrawn.*

<sup>90</sup> The 4th Bn. (1st Bde.) was for the time being left at the head of "K" Trench.

<sup>91</sup> Pte. J. Bourke of this platoon, however, volunteered to bring up water and in spite of very heavy shell-fire returned in two hours with a supply of water and rum. Private Norman Lynch (of Youanmi, W. Aust.), 11th Bn., was killed when similarly trying to carry the water-bottles of himself and his mates through the barrage. The number of such incidents at Pozières is too great for enumeration.

<sup>92</sup> A continuation of the Ganter Weg.

<sup>93</sup> Several incidents of this sort occurred, as was inevitable, when bombing parties of the 48th Division were working up the communication trenches to meet parties of Australians. In other instances the mistake was quickly discovered (British and German bombs being easily distinguishable) and ill-results averted.



In the 5th Brigade's sector an endeavour was made to seize the uncaptured portion of the O.G. Lines south of the main road by means of a frontal raid by two companies of the reserve battalion—the 20th. For this there was to be no special barrage, it being thought that on previous nights the bombardments had served to awaken the neighbouring enemy machine-guns. The artillery-fire would merely cease at midnight, when three parties from one company of the 20th would enter O.G.1 at separate points and then bomb to the flanks so as to seize the whole trench; a second company, if the first succeeded, was to pass through and seize O.G.2. The 20th had not been informed of the intended attack until a few hours before dark, and consequently no time remained for adequate reconnaissance. Lieutenant-Colonel Ralston,<sup>94</sup> with Captain McCall, his adjutant, led the companies to the headquarters of the 12th in Contalmaison Valley. It was then dark, but Colonel Elliott took them up Copse Avenue and, climbing out, showed Ralston the German flares rising and falling from O.G.1, and indicated the position of the railway, along which the right-hand party was to direct itself. The companies had as yet no bombs, but McCall, discovering that there was a supply at the Chalk Pit, led the troops thither. Some of the bombs were then found to be undetonated, and, while they were still being examined, midnight arrived, and the attack was postponed until 3 o'clock.<sup>95</sup>

Shortly before that hour the three parties, each in single file, followed by a fourth carrying barbed wire and tools, were led towards the enemy. Almost at once flares began to rise in increased numbers, machine-guns opened, and two of the parties were checked in front of the enemy trench. The centre one, however, led by Lieutenant Harper,<sup>96</sup> rushed its objective, and for an hour held on, fighting with bombs. Harper, though hit in the head with a bomb, lay on the parapet

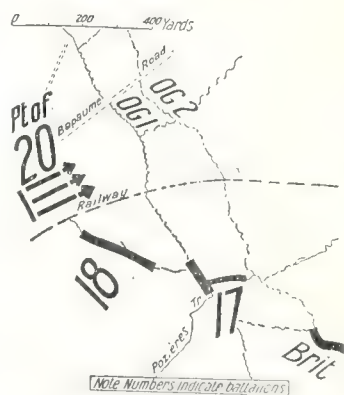
<sup>94</sup> Lieut.-Col. A. W. Ralston, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 20th Bn., 1916/18; 2nd M.G. Bn., 1918/19. Barrister-at-law; of Strathfield and Rose Bay, N.S.W.; b. Croydon, N.S.W., 27 Nov., 1885.

<sup>95</sup> Ralston recommended that it should not take place that night, but he was overruled.

<sup>96</sup> Capt. R. R. Harper, D.S.O.; 20th Bn. Medical student, of Kooyong, Vic., and Sydney; b. Toorak, Vic., 18 Feb., 1894.

directing, and, when grenades ran out and it was clear that there was no means of securing more, he brought his men back over No-Man's Land to the front post of the 17th Battalion in O.G.I.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile Ralston, who had placed his headquarters in a shell-hole in No-Man's Land, had observed figures making their way back through the dark, and, learning that the assault had failed, held back his second company.<sup>98</sup>

The third attempt to seize the O.G. Lines as far as the main road had thus failed. But the relief of the 1st and 3rd Brigades had been completed, and the 2nd and 5th were holding the front when, at 7 a.m. on July 26th, the German bombardment again descended on Pozières. The enemy fire this day was as severe as that of July 25th—far heavier than that of the 24th. The front line newly dug by the Australians beyond the village had now been accurately located and was being heavily shelled. Captain Binns of the 6th Battalion again saved many lives by moving his men forward into shell-holes, retaining only a handful of men with the Lewis guns beside himself in the trenches.<sup>99</sup> Captain Hurrey<sup>100</sup> of the 8th took his company into the orchard.<sup>101</sup> The village, constantly hidden in rolling clouds of dust and smoke, was again the spectacle of the battlefield. At one time the bursts of German heavy shell—5.9-inch or larger—in its south-western corner averaged from fifteen to twenty every minute. Part of the



<sup>97</sup> This post had no information that the attack was being made; but, as the approaching party numbered only twenty-five the 17th fortunately withheld its fire until it recognised the men as Australians. Harper was wounded a second time, in the leg, and was invalided to Australia.

<sup>98</sup> Some of the 20th lay in shell-holes during the day and came in after dark. The battalion lost 2 officers and 88 other ranks in this raid.

<sup>99</sup> This splendid officer, though he survived the battle unhurt, never recovered his health. He was invalided to Australia but died on shipboard just as he was reaching her shores.

<sup>100</sup> Capt. J. S. Hurrey, 8th Bn. Engineer; of Malvern, Vic.; b. 30 Oct., 1884.

<sup>101</sup> This movement, like that of the 12th on the previous day (see p. 575), was mistaken by some who saw it for a general retirement of the battalion, and was the occasion of an alarming report that proved groundless.

upper chamber of Gibraltar—now the headquarters of the 7th and 8th Battalions—was smashed in, two signallers being killed. The roof of the log hut south of the road (the headquarters of Colonel Bennett, 6th Battalion) was struck six times, but was saved for a time by the débris that had fallen upon it.<sup>102</sup> Runners whose way to these two headquarters lay up the sunken end of the Chalk Pit road, and the working- and carrying-parties which had to pass up the same dreadful avenue to reach the north and west of the village, suffered heavily. The runners arrived exhausted and dazed. The line along the Bapaume road, which had proved such a death-trap on the two previous days, was still being held by part of the 7th Battalion, the troops being now in shell-craters. Casualties were continuous. One by one the officers were wounded—the diary of the battalion commander (Lieutenant-Colonel Jess) shows:

9.30. Lieut. Wright<sup>103</sup> brought in—shell-shock.

1.50. Lieut. Hamilton wounded.

2.45. Lieut. Sutherland wounded.

3.30. Lieut. Hoban<sup>104</sup> wounded (lost leg since).

The bombardment slackened at 11.30 but descended again at noon for half-an-hour. It then slackened till 1 p.m., when it recommenced, and, continuing hour after hour, was still in progress at sunset. In that half of the battlefield, except at Pozzières, very little was stirring. From the right sector of the III Corps the report was, "A very quiet day"; from the left (where the 23rd Division this day relieved the 1st British), "very little shell-fire," except where the flank touched that of the Anzac in the O.G. Lines, which were reported as being

shelled heavily all day and from time to time with great intensity.

Soon after the bombardment started General Walker (1st Australian Division) ordered one battery of the I Anzac Heavy Artillery to be detailed for counter-battery work all

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<sup>102</sup> It was finally broken in shortly after Bennett and his staff left it.

<sup>103</sup> Capt. H. J. Wright, 7th Bn. Timber merchant; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Hawthorn, 11 Jan., 1891.

<sup>104</sup> Lieut. D. J. Hoban, 7th Bn. Auctioneer and grazier; of Alexandra district, Vic.; b. Molesworth, Vic., 18 Nov., 1883.

day.<sup>105</sup> At 1 o'clock the commander of the Reserve Army's artillery was appealed to and replied that the batteries of that army were already doing everything possible to suppress the German bombardment. At 4.5 p.m. Colonel Bennett of the 6th Battalion, the young commander who had taken control of the Australian line at the Second Battle of Krithia, and whose headquarters in the log hut were kept in touch with the front line by his intelligence officer, Captain Rogers, reported:

My men are being unmercifully shelled. They cannot hold on if attack is launched. The firing line and my headquarters are being plastered with heavy guns and the town is being swept with shrapnel. I myself am O.K., but the front line is being buried.

About 5 o'clock so tremendous was the bombardment that all the battalion commanders of the 2nd Brigade as well as the artillery officer at Gibraltar, who this day was to have begun directing fire from that point on the wire in front of the O.G. Lines, became convinced that an attack was portended. It happened that at 6.45 p.m. one telephone-line at Gibraltar was for the moment in working order, Lieutenant McCutchan<sup>106</sup> of the 1st Divisional Signal Company, though hit through the arm, having personally completed its repair.<sup>107</sup> Through this line Colonel Jess of the 7th sent a message to the headquarters of the 2nd Brigade, describing the day's experience, and adding:

It has been impossible to construct adequate trenches owing to the pulped nature of the ground. Those that were constructed N.E. of Pozières are wiped out, and men are so dazed that they are incapable of working or fighting. Consider relief imperative as we could not resist attack if this is the preparation of it. 6th and 8th Battalions endorse this.

Then, taking the telephone, Jess personally told brigade headquarters that, as the smoke and brickdust round Gibraltar entirely prevented the artillery observers from seeing, the only safe course, if attack was imminent, was to turn all guns upon the enemy's firing-line and render it impossible for the Germans to get through.

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<sup>105</sup> When the Corps heavy-artillery commander (who had been placed under Walker's orders) objected that his ammunition-supply was not adequate for this and other tasks, Walker overruled the objection, insisting that the troops in Pozières must thus be protected.

<sup>106</sup> Capt. W. C. McCutchan, M.B.E., M.C., D.C.M.; 1st Div. Sig. Coy. Grain sampler; of South Yarra, Vic.; b. West Melbourne, 10 May, 1877.

<sup>107</sup> This appears to be the line which, till July 25, had been repaired by Gunners Greet and Mudd (*see footnote 46 on p. 518*).



This message had the intended effect.<sup>108</sup> By 7.5 the whole artillery of the 1st Australian Division was firing heavily on the German front line. At 8.30 the enemy's fire paused for half-an-hour, but it fell again with great intensity at 9 o'clock. On learning this, Corps headquarters at 9.55 appealed to Reserve Army for assistance from the artillery of the II and III Corps. Half-an-hour later the army staff answered that it had put every available heavy battery upon "counter-battery" work. As the heavy guns opened, a sudden change occurred in the enemy's action. Rockets and flares went up from his line, and, probably imagining that he was about to be attacked, his artillery changed to shrapnel and gas shell. His fire soon afterwards eased, subsequently breaking out once, but dying down at 11.30 until it was almost silent. At that hour the two battalions of the 6th Brigade (2nd Australian Division) which were to relieve the remaining infantry of the 1st Australian Division in the western and northern half of Pozzières began their movement into the village.<sup>109</sup>

No attack followed this tremendous bombardment. It is now known that the enemy had adopted a plan seldom if ever afterwards applied in the experience of Australian troops—that of laying down a day-long barrage, not in preparation for any intended offensive, but simply with the object of inflicting damage and loss. The bombardments of July 24 and 25 were intended to make the village "sturmfest" ("ready for assault"); but, after the utter failure of the attempted assault on the afternoon of July 25, it was decided not to attack again, but to bombard Pozzières and its approaches throughout the 26th, the special feature of the operation, however, being a sudden synchronised "crash" by the artillery of three divisions<sup>110</sup> after an interval of silence. This appears to have occurred shortly after 5 p.m., the concentration of fire lasting for half-an-hour.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> On receiving Jess's alarming message at about 7 p.m. General Forsyth answered: "Men must and will fight if necessary. All artillery now turned on to stop bombardment." Jess at 10.16 explained: "No movement by officers or men in shelled area to retire has been made. Men have stuck to crater holes and no one will move in a rearward direction. Messages were sent to enable headquarters to realise the seriousness of the position."

<sup>109</sup> The four battalion commanders of the 6th Brigade had visited Gibraltar from 3 to 3.50 p.m. to reconnoitre the position. Jess had recommended that no more than two battalions should be sent to replace the four in the village.

<sup>110</sup> 18th Reserve, 117th, and 26th Reserve Divisions. The enemy was also under the impression that he was being attacked by the Australians north-east of Pozzières about 5 p.m.

<sup>111</sup> In this concentration the following howitzers appear to have been employed:—  
Firing to the N.E. of Thiepval-Pozzières road: ten of 21-cm., twelve of 15-cm., eight of 10-cm.  
Firing to the S.W. of Thiepval-Pozzières road: eight of 21-cm., twelve of 15-cm., four of 10-cm.  
Firing on Pozzières Trench (Lattorf Graben): twelve of 15-cm.

The strain of this almost incessant fire from 7 in the morning until 11 at night was probably the heaviest yet placed on Australian troops; but the supreme test—that of being called upon to face an attack after such a bombardment—had not yet come, and the probable conduct of the troops in that contingency was still unascertained. In the 7th Battalion two company officers reported when the fire eased:

11.35. Men shaky from effects of bombardment. Otherwise well.—C. H. Swift, Capt.

Situation much improved, artillery fire having diminished. Men tired but cheery.—F. J. S. Hoad,<sup>112</sup> Lt.

All positions were held; and after dark the 8th Battalion established forward, in Tom's Cut, the post which had been withdrawn in the morning when bombed by the Warwicks.<sup>113</sup> Before day-break the 1st Australian Division, with the exception of its artillery and a few other units, had been withdrawn, having captured all the objectives set for it except the O.G. Lines immediately south of the main road.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Capt. F. J. S. Hoad, 7th Bn. Clerk; of Elsternwick, Vic.; b. Port Melbourne, 20 April, 1883.

<sup>113</sup> See p. 586 (*sketch*).

<sup>114</sup> An Australian diary, describing the relief of the 4th Battalion, vividly records the scene and the chatter of the men. Their conversation, though almost literally recorded, must not be assumed to represent the truth, the men being in a highly overstrained condition and, as usual under such circumstances, apt to talk wildly.

"I have just seen them coming out, far up Sausage Valley. Lord, what a sight! The gun-flashes intermittently showing the place up, brighter than day. The men were coming out in twos and threes. 'Is this the 2nd Battalion?' 'Is this the 4th Battalion?' 'They're getting some hot scran at the cookhouse, Bill.' 'Get down near the cookers—the boys are there.'

"They came out quietly, like the men they were. And round the cookers (the travelling kitchens) in the glow of an occasional stove (on wheels) what a reunion. 'His brother an' I carried 'im down.' 'See them get into that fat Hun. . . . My God! a trench full of them. We'd been teasing them all night, bombing an' then retiring, and they had about 150 of them there in the morning—an' by God the boys let 'em have it. Billy Smith, he dropped his machine-gun, an' I chucked away me bombs—I wanted to get at 'em with my fists, God, what a time! They started running, and we after them, but I was too done, I couldn't run fast enough. Little X—Y—, he had a wounded chap, and when I asks 'What are you going to do with him?' he says—'take 'im round the communication trench here.' I said, 'You can't do that—the man's wounded—but he'd have killed him right enough. He's a curious chap—and that German was falling on me—he was goin' to give me half of Germany.'

"'See that prisoner when the tree fell across Mr. ———— he run out and lifted it off him.'

"'Counter-attack—our guns finished that. . . .'

"'I guess some of these guns here ought to be crimed. By God, if we'd had the beggars up there I swear we'd have gone down and bombed them out of their own batteries. Killed a lot of our best men last night, they did. Couldn't stop 'em in time. . . .'

"First I passed the 1st Brigade quietly getting their food and coffee and chatting like schoolboys; then further on the 10th Battalion lying quietly by the side of the trench railway. Some of the 18th Battalion fatigue party was passing them and they took it for British. 'They're Tommies,' I heard one man say. . . ."



42. TROOPS CONGREGATING AROUND THEIR REGIMENTAL "COOKERS," NEAR ALBERT, JULY 1916

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ76.*



43. SOME OF THE 1ST AUSTRALIAN DIVISION AFTER RELIEF

The troops are wearing German helmets and caps brought out of the fight. (In the foreground is a Lewis gun.)

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ135.*

*To face p. 592.*



44. HORSE AMBULANCE RETURNING WITH WOUNDED DOWN SAUSAGE VALLEY

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ103.  
Taken on 28th August, 1916.*



45. AN AUSTRALIAN SIGNALLER REPAIRING HIS GEAR IN SAUSAGE VALLEY, 28TH AUGUST, 1916

His mate is sleeping beneath the cart.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ78.*

*To face p. 593.*



In achieving this, the division lost 5,285 officers and men, of whom 4,937 were infantry, 113 engineers, 180 pioneers, and 30 artillery. The 1st Brigade being in the western sector and, on the whole, more heavily shelled, had lost 1,942; the 3rd lost 1,656; the 2nd, originally in reserve, 1,336.<sup>115</sup>

The total loss was thus slightly less than that of the 5th Division at Fromelles. But the effect of this battle upon the troops cannot be estimated by these casualties. The staff-work and organisation had in some respects been far better than at Fromelles. Although the great majority of the men and a large proportion of the officers and N.C.O's were new, and although all the important attacks except that up "K" Trench on July 25th had been made in the dark and sometimes (as in the O.G. Lines) in nightmarish confusion, there had been no patent blunder or miscarriage of plans. The accurate barrage of the artillery had afforded most powerful assistance to the infantry in attack and defence; the bold employment of Lewis guns in the foremost line of every assault had given the Australian infantry an offensive weapon immensely effective and thoroughly suited to their temperament;<sup>116</sup> the presence at each brigade headquarters of *liaison* officers from the artillery, engineers, and flanking British brigades, and the stationing of artillery observers at

<sup>115</sup> Particulars of losses were:

1st Brigade			2nd Brigade			3rd Brigade		
	Off's	Oth's		Off's	Oth's		Off's	Oth's
Bde H.Q. ..	1	5	Bde. H.Q. ..	1	—	Bde. H.Q. ..	—	—
1st Bn. ..	13	473	5th Bn. ..	13	458	9th Bn. ..	17	299
2nd Bn. ..	10	500	6th Bn. ..	7	183	10th Bn. ..	12	315
3rd Bn. ..	13	484	7th Bn. ..	8	326	11th Bn. ..	18	511
4th Bn. ..	14	388	8th Bn. ..	15	321	12th Bn. ..	14	407
1st M.G. Coy. ..	1	27	2nd M.G. Coy. ..	1	5	3rd M.G. Coy. ..	4	39
1st T.M. Bty. ..	—	14	2nd T.M. Bty. ..	—	—	3rd T.M. Bty. ..	1	19
1st Fld. Amb. ..	—	15	2nd Fld. Amb. ..	—	4	3rd Fld. Amb. ..	—	6
1st Div. Art. ..	4	26						
1st Div. Engrs ..	6	107						
1st Pioneer Bn. ..	8	172						

<sup>116</sup> This method was not peculiar to the Australians, but had been urged by Rawlinson upon his army before the offensive began. German officers had from the first remarked on the swiftness with which the British brought their "light machine-guns" into action.

some parts of the front battle-line—for example, in the O.G. trenches and in Gibraltar—rendered it much easier to afford prompt mutual support and information, in spite of the constant destruction of signal wires. The arrival of engineer parties and pioneers,<sup>117</sup> as soon as an objective was reached, to dig redoubts or communication trenches, impressed the infantry as evidence of good organisation,<sup>118</sup> and, though not all work planned was completed, well-dug posts were quickly established and no less than three communication trenches driven through to Pozières village within a few hours after the first attack. By reason of this provision and the staunchness of the carrying parties, almost all troops in the front line received water, ammunition, and a certain amount of food at proper intervals, in spite of constant heavy barrages. The determination of the infantry had been such that the tremendous effort of the enemy's artillery had failed to stop the several renewals of their advance or to drive them from one inch of the ground consolidated. Through the enemy's inability to observe from the air, his bombardments of the back area had been negligible, and his artillery, though terrible when the line was located, had been slow to discover each new advance of the front. Moreover, fortunately, as in other battles, there occurred in the bombardment pauses or slackenings, sometimes lasting most of the night. During these, up to the present, the relieving battalions had managed to get through, and the relieved units to come back, without disaster. As the enemy at this stage had been driven from the air, he could seldom observe these movements even when they occurred by day.

The regimental historians of each side, in describing the Pozières fighting, tend to stress the effects of the opposing artillery, and to recognise the suffering of their own units

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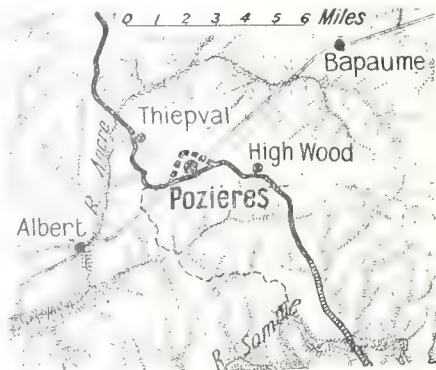
<sup>117</sup> It has been claimed that these troops followed the attacks almost as closely as an additional "wave."

<sup>118</sup> Colonel Nicholson of the 1st Pioneer Battalion was continually at the front. At an anxious moment on the morning of July 23 he assisted General MacLagan with the Lewis guns of his battalion and 20,000 rounds of ammunition; and a report by him on the position in the O.G. Lines on July 24, where the Pioneers were then working, remains the clearest record of the situation in that obscure corner of the battlefield.

and not that of their opponents. Yet the intimate records show that the conditions, at least in the two opposing front lines, in this storm centre were almost identical. It is true that the German artillery, though by no means so inferior as German accounts frequently imply, was less powerful than that of the Allies; but Haig's new policy of attacking on narrow fronts permitted a most formidable concentration of its fire. Also, the German infantry in the O.G. Lines had far better shelter in their deep dugouts than the Australians had in the trenches dug by themselves when in action; and the losses of Australian battalions during the Pozières fighting appear to have been much greater in aggregate than those of the German units, and not less in proportion to their strength. However, the German troops undoubtedly suffered more severely in the back areas, their rest billets being nightly bombed by British airmen and shelled by long-range guns. Closer to the line their batteries were often under intense counter-battery fire, directed by airmen, from which the British guns were almost free, while movements of the German infantry within a mile of the front were also often discovered and the fire of heavy batteries directed upon them. The British airmen occasionally flew so low as to chase horse-traffic or infantry with their machine-guns. This disturbance of the enemy in his rear area was important chiefly as a means of robbing his troops of their rest, while the activity of the British airmen as compared with the inactivity of their own was a source of continual bitterness and discontent. The sense of the German troops also revolted at the practice of attempting to recover all lost ground, however unimportant it might be. Though probably held to be necessary, in order to prevent demoralisation, the system was responsible for most of the German loss in such fighting as that near Pozières or at Delville Wood.

On the Australian side, also, doubts as to the wisdom of their leadership could not but suggest themselves. It was gradually becoming obvious both to officers and men that the struggle at Pozières was being fought on lines which rendered it particularly intense and difficult, since it involved frequent short advances on a narrow front. During these

days, partly through the change in Haig's plan of campaign, and partly through the breaking down of the offensive everywhere else, this dreadful village was, with the exception of Delville Wood, the only place in which the British front was actively moving.<sup>119</sup> The enemy, who regarded the possible capture of the windmill crest with deep apprehension, was thus free to concentrate on the narrow front of each advance the fire of all his artillery in the surrounding sector, and to devote to it a high proportion of his available ammunition. The adoption of the main road as the final objective for the first assault, although it provided the troops with an easy landmark—an immense advantage in a night-attack—subsequently afforded the enemy's artillery a target that it could not miss, and on which



<sup>119</sup> There was also fighting at High Wood; and an attack on Maurepas, Guillemont, and Falfemont Farm had been planned for July 25, but was postponed. Nevertheless, it remains true that, during the last week of July and the three weeks which followed, the only sector in which the British front was constantly advanced and the German lines driven back was that of this secondary British thrust at Pozieres. In the German official account of this battle (contained in the monograph *Somme-Nord*, by Lieutenant-Colonel Albrecht von Stosch), the interval of "piecemeal fighting" is regarded as having lasted from July 6 to August 23. During this period, it is noted, in place of decisive attacks on a large scale, there occurred local fights "which in the English sector grouped themselves chiefly around Pozieres and High Wood; in the French about Maurepas and the Somme." At the time of the events, the struggle around High Wood (July 14-18) was hardly regarded by the British command as a "local" effort—piecemeal fighting was not deliberately begun until July 23; for the period July 23-August 23, the Pozieres sector was evidently regarded by the Germans as being the most active on the British front. A contemporary German account, *Die Schlacht an der Somme im Monat Juli* (p. 17), states: "This (the capture of Pozieres) was the only advance which the enemy managed to achieve on his whole front during the last third of July." It does not appear to have been realised by the Germans that this thrust was, according to the plans of the British commander, only subsidiary, his main effort during these weeks being represented by the Fourth Army's unsuccessful attacks near Guillemont and Ginchy. Of the situation on the Reserve Army's front, on July 25 the D.D.M.S., II Corps, wrote: "Of the two divisions (of II Corps) in the line (49 and 48) the southern is the only one at all seriously engaged. The Anzacs are continually on the offence on our right, and any attack they make must have its flank protected by a covering offensive by our division." II Corps General Staff wrote: "The immediate key of the situation is the village of Pozieres and the high ground to the N.E. Until this is taken and consolidated, the line of the 48th Division can only be advanced by small independent attacks and by bombing."



shells streamed in deadly enfilade. Beneath this continued concentrated bombardment—which, whether judged by the casualties inflicted or by the destruction of the bombarded area, appears to have been among the heaviest that occurred either on the Somme or at Verdun—the Australian troops had to hold on, mainly in open trenches dug by themselves. It is true that in spite of the bombardment they had not merely held every inch of ground gained, but had thrust steadily forward until they had seized the whole village and the ground from which the next attack must be launched. But the strain to which they were subjected in doing so was not one from which recovery was easy or rapid. In addition to those who had been officially reported “wounded” or “shell-shocked”<sup>120</sup> a large number had been buried in tumbled trenches and extricated, many of them several times; and, in a proportion even of those who had come through actually untouched, constant fear and physical fatigue, though mastered, had combined to produce effects which in peace time would be diagnosed as “nervous breakdown.” Even the artillery, although the back areas were not heavily shelled, was almost exhausted with lack of sleep and constant work in support of its infantry.<sup>121</sup> The divisional staff in Albert had worked with little rest, and serious mistakes in orders—which fortunately were corrected in time—were due to this cause.<sup>122</sup> The brigade staffs had to work continuously for six days and five nights, and the smallness of their numbers

<sup>120</sup> Certain figures were kept which, though incomplete, show the ratio of cases officially termed “shell-shock” to those of wounded:

	July 22	July 23	July 24	July 25	July 26
Shell-shock ..	11	31	72	205	57
Wounded ..	43	687	180	730	184

<sup>121</sup> The expenditure of ammunition by the artillery of the 1st Australian Division was:

	18-pounders—		4.5-in. Hows.—		Total.
	shrapnel.	high-explosive.	high-explosive.		
July 21 ..	8,033	1,249	599	..	9,881
July 22 ..	5,706	881	602	..	7,189
July 23 ..	10,358	6,152	1,278	..	17,783
July 24 ..	2,492	965	1,100	..	4,557
July 25 ..	10,471	4,036	3,478 (+ 30 shrap.)	..	18,015
July 26 ..	3,913	1,499	585	..	5,997
July 27 ..	5,687	2,399	171	..	8,257
	<u>46,660</u>	<u>17,181</u>	<u>7,813 (+ 30 shrap.)</u>		<u>71,684</u>

<sup>122</sup> One is mentioned on p. 571.

permitted of little rest.<sup>123</sup> The demands upon the runners, who must go straight through almost any barrage, night or day, were perhaps the heaviest. It is recorded that, at MacLagan's headquarters, one of these messengers

came in exhausted after a run on July 24th—the barrages had begun to be dreadful—went outside into the passage where they used to rest, and lay down. A little afterwards a runner came in to the general. "X—has had an accident with his rifle, sir—shot himself. . . ." He had found it more than he could bear, put his rifle to his head, and "went out" uncomplaining.<sup>124</sup>

Runners and stretcher-bearers often found the passage of the barrage less trying when they were carrying an urgent message or a wounded man, since their minds were then intent upon their work. It was when they went empty-handed that the task was most dreaded. However, it is doubtful whether the strain upon them was heavier than on the mass of the infantry, who had simply to face the bombardment hour after hour in open trenches. To men who had done so, the prospect of an early return to the front line necessarily carried with it a haunting dread—in some cases easily thrown off, in others amounting, when the strain was eased, to terror<sup>125</sup> from which they could never thoroughly recover and which rendered them useless in future for front-line work. The majority, however, came out highly strung and excited, some wearing the spiked German helmets, or belts with the

<sup>123</sup> Of General MacLagan at Contalmaison, an Australian diary states: "He tried to get to sleep but could not manage it. Poor old Tollemache (the brigade major) about the second night said to him . . . 'I'm afraid, sir, I can't keep awake any longer—you want some sleep, sir—won't you lie down?—I'm afraid—I—can't—manage—it—any—longer,' and his head dropped on his hands on the table. They led him to a corner of the dugout, in the kitchen of it, and there he put his head on his pack and fell straight away into a deep sleep."

<sup>124</sup> For the Australian War Memorial General Smyth has recorded particulars of the deaths of two runners of the 1st Brigade during this fight. One came in, quietly delivered his message, and then fell dead of wounds received on the way. Another (belonging to the 2nd Battalion), after passing through the dreadful approach to Pozières—the sunken end of the Chalk Pit road—was mortally wounded by a shell as he crossed the main road. He died with the message held high in the air between his fingers. Twenty minutes later a party, crossing the road, came upon him still holding out the paper, and carried it to its proper destination.

A runner of the 2nd Brigade, Private L. Angel (of Alexandra, Vic.), was hit in the back with a piece of shell when on the way to deliver a message to the 5th Battalion. His legs were paralysed, but, seeing an officer standing at a distance, he dragged himself forward and gave him the message. When he was picked up two hours later, his first words were: "Has that message been delivered?"

<sup>125</sup> During the bombardment a Russian in the 9th Battalion was working like a terrier on hands and knees, whimpering the while, in desperate anxiety to scrape away the soil from comrades who had been buried. When eventually himself buried and dug out, he ran to the rear.

motto "*Gott mit uns*," laughing and exchanging witticisms with any British or Australian troops who stood watching them or passed them on their way to the front.

The 3rd Brigade, relieved during the night of the 25th, reached the brickfields west of Albert on the morning of the 26th, and, after a hot meal and some rum, marched on to camp in the wood near Vadencourt. The 1st and 2nd Brigades followed. On this second day's march they passed at Warloy the foremost brigade of the 4th Division, which was following the 2nd to the line. A young sergeant of the 14th Battalion<sup>126</sup> has left a description of this passage:

Although we knew it was stiff fighting, we had our eyes opened when we saw these men march by. Those who saw them will never forget it as long as they live. They looked like men who had been in Hell. Almost without exception each man looked drawn and haggard, and so dazed that they appeared to be walking in a dream, and their eyes looked glassy and starey. Quite a few were silly, and these were the only noisy ones in the crowd. What they must have looked like before they had a night's sleep and clean-up must have been twice as bad as what we saw. We could see that they had lost a lot of men—some companies seemed to have been nearly wiped out—and then again others seemed as if they had not fared quite so bad. In all my experience I have never seen men quite so shaken up as these. . . . When our battalion came out of the same ordeal nine days after this, we were in no position to compare our boys with the 1st Division, but we were in a position to know what they suffered; and it was easily the worst battering we ever had to stand. . . .

The men who rested in Vadencourt Wood next day were utterly different from the Australian soldiers of tradition. The bright spirit and activity seemed to have gone out of them; they were like boys emerging from long illness. Many lay quietly apart from the others, rolled in their blankets under the trees, reading books, smoking, writing home letters. On the fourth day, in most cases, they moved on to the villages near the Amiens-Doullens road, where training was again taken up. A certain number of reinforcements arrived, and the battalions, outwardly at all events, regained their former spring and spirits. Meanwhile, twenty miles to the east, the 2nd Australian Division was facing a task even more difficult than that carried through by the 1st.

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<sup>126</sup> Sergeant E. J. Rule.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### FIRST GENERAL ASSAULT UPON POZIÈRES HEIGHTS.

THE 2nd Australian Division, which now took the strain of the Pozières offensive, had never yet been engaged as a whole in any major operation except the evacuation of Gallipoli. Though at that time only half-trained, it had not, like the 1st Division, lost half its original personnel in the reorganisation in Egypt. Its fighting units, therefore, were probably at least as well-seasoned as those of the 1st, although its commander, Major-General Legge, and part of the divisional staff, had no experience of attacking on a large scale.

Of its three brigades, the 5th, which was first to enter the Pozières front relieving the 3rd Brigade in the eastern half of that battlefield, consisted of New South Welshmen, many of whom at the outbreak of war had rushed to serve in German New Guinea and had subsequently re-enlisted for general service under their old commander, Brigadier-General Holmes. Holmes—in civil life the secretary of the Water and Sewerage Board in Sydney, an experienced administrator, and a keen militia man—was of a hearty and cheerful disposition, but he enforced a high standard of duty. He was famed for his courage—a fact which sometimes influenced his conduct—and enforced his standards on the brigade by daily visiting its most dangerous sectors and seeing that duties were being carried out to his satisfaction. These visits, during which his cheery face and the red staff cap-band (which he insisted on wearing in spite of the order to wear the steel helmet) must often have been only too visible to the enemy, were not always welcome to garrisons of outposts who sometimes suffered the shell-fire induced by them, but they undoubtedly helped to keep his officers and men at a high pitch of performance. He had deliberately officered his battalions with men chosen for qualities of leadership—partly young Sydney University





46. GENERAL BIRDWOOD SPEAKING TO MEN OF THE 2ND AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE IN  
VADENCOURT WOOD AFTER THEIR FIRST TOUR AT POZIERES

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. E285.*

*Index p. 600.*



47. BRIGADIER-GENERAL GELLIBRAND AND HIS STAFF AT BREAKFAST IN A SHELL-HOLE IN SAUSAGE VALLEY, 1ST AUGUST, 1916

*Left to right:* Major E. C. P. Plant (brigade-major), Lieutenant D. N. Rentoul (brigade signalling officer), General J. Gellibrand, Lieutenant-Colonel R. Smith (22nd Battalion); *in background:* Lieutenant S. G. Savage (attached), Captain R. H. Norman (staff captain); *in foreground:* Lieutenant W. R. Gilchrist (engineers), Lieutenant J. Roydhouse (attached).

graduates—with the result that the brigade was exceedingly well led and at this time probably the most effective in the division.

The 6th Brigade, which took over the left sector, north of the village, was Victorian, and, since it contained the highest proportion of town-bred men, it might be expected—according to the general rule of which the truth was unquestionable in the Australian force, though less marked than in others—to be less hardened than at any rate those from the “outer” States such as Queensland and Western Australia. Its commander, however, was a man of exceptional personality, Brigadier-General John Gellibrand, of whom some description has already been given in these pages. A cultured soldier, staff-college graduate turned apple-grower, usually wearing an old “Aussie” tunic (as worn by a private) and living as simply as his men, sardonically humorous but sensitive to a degree, he was, like many sensitive men, a riddle to his superiors. His judgments sometimes appeared to them oblique, and he seldom explained them, since he loathed to thrust himself forward and attributed to those who dealt with him an understanding of his motives which they seldom possessed. He had the sensitive man’s high code of honour—however unpalatable the truth, he told it bluntly and left it at that. These qualities made him a difficult subordinate—not popular with his superiors, but of far greater value to them than they were aware; for, in his ability to inspire his own staff and battalion commanders, and, through them, his whole brigade, he had no equal in the A.I.F. His brigade staff comprised a group of youngsters—E. C. P. Plant, brigade-major; R. H. Norman,<sup>1</sup> staff-captain; Lieutenant Rentoul,<sup>2</sup> brigade signalling officer; together with Captain Gilchrist,<sup>3</sup> engineer; and Lieutenants Savige<sup>4</sup> and Roydhouse,<sup>5</sup> “learners” (attached

<sup>1</sup> Maj. R. H. Norman, D.S.O., M.C. Shipping clerk; b. Kent Town, S. Aust., 10 Oct., 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Lieut. D. N. Rentoul, M.C.; 2nd Div. Sig. Coy. Grocer and clerk; of Kensington, Vic.; b. Deniliquin, N.S.W., 1894. Killed in action, 3 May, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Capt. W. R. Gilchrist, M.C.; 6th Fld. Coy. Engrs. Surveyor; of Cremorne, N.S.W.; b. Paddington, N.S.W., 2 Dec., 1889. Killed in action, 3 May, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> Lieut.-Col. S. G. Savige, D.S.O., M.C.; 24th Bn. Draper; of Hawthorn, Vic., b. Morwell, Vic., 26 June, 1890.

<sup>5</sup> Capt. J. Roydhouse, M.C.; 28th Bn. School teacher; of Subiaco, W. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 24 Sept., 1892.



for staff-training). All these lived together as one family. Any morning they—together with "Gelly" in his shirtsleeves and old felt hat—might be seen breakfasting in a large shell-hole outside brigade headquarters in Sausage Gully. With the commanders of his four battalions and of the machine-gun company and a few others, this young staff shared in the little dinner parties or other convivial meetings to which Gellibrand invited his immediate subordinates whenever the brigade was out of the line. By such indirect means, with occasional advice, private and painfully direct, he had manufactured a team which pulled together like a crew in an eight-oared race. Whereas many unit-commanders even of fine character were inclined to look on the failure of a neighbouring unit as a grievance, it was remarked that those of the 6th Brigade regarded it only as an opportunity for offering instant assistance. Gellibrand was at this time endeavouring to tune his battalion commanders up to his own sense of obligation by refusing to accept, as reason for non-performance of tasks, such reports as "shell-fire too heavy." "That excuse," he said grimly during the first tour at Pozières, "is not given now." At the same time he had not secured among his subordinates the standard of personal supervision that he deemed necessary, and at critical moments felt compelled to undertake the supervision himself. His battalion commanders were often sharply stung by this goad, but they knew that the brigadier and his staff would never fail them: however dense the barrage, Gellibrand or one of his "team" would be there with the necessary food, or ammunition, or advice when wanted. The result was an increasingly devoted spirit throughout the brigade.

The 7th Brigade, which General Legge for the time being retained in reserve at Tara Hill near La Boisselle, was a composite formation, coming mainly from the less settled States—the 25th Battalion from Queensland, the 26th from Queensland and Tasmania, the 27th from South Australia, and the 28th from Western Australia. Consequently, with the exception of the South Australian battalion, its units included an unusually high proportion of country men—the



Queenslanders and Western Australians, largely from the mining-fields and stations outback. It would therefore, other things being equal, be expected to be the hardest and most effective of the three, and it is probable that General Legge regarded it as such. It was nevertheless, at this particular time, not altogether happily commanded, the defect lying among some of its senior regimental officers. This does not appear to have been suspected by the brigade-commander, General Paton—a gallant, capable, and courteous officer, a keen ex-militia man, and one who impressed all that met him as possessing the moral, mental, and physical qualities of an ideal soldier. Paton did not lack experience of men, having commanded the infantry in New Guinea under Holmes; and his brigade-major, an officer of the Black Watch, Captain Rowan-Hamilton,<sup>6</sup> had also soon won the esteem of the A.I.F. Several of the brigade units—the 7th Machine Gun Company and the trench-mortar battery, for example—were generally believed to be pre-eminently efficient; among its infantry, the Western Australian Battalion (28th) was admittedly one of the finest in the force, and the remainder were of precisely the same material that constituted the other composite Australian brigades. But they were not all happy in their leadership, and lacked the inspiration to which some of them afterwards reacted in an outstanding degree.

The story of the achievement of the three brigades in the terrible fighting in which they were now to be plunged hangs largely upon the power of these brigadiers and the regimental commanders to lead or drive their subordinates through that ordeal. For the organisation of the attack, the divisional commander, Legge, was chiefly responsible. He was a leader concerning whom opinions widely differed. The administrative branches of his staff were strongly impressed by his ability, and made no secret of their admiration; on the other hand, his general staff, originally composed entirely of British officers, had criticised him somewhat freely as tending to

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<sup>6</sup> Lieut.-Col. G. B. Rowan-Hamilton, D.S.O., M.C., p.s.c.; The Black Watch (Royal Highlanders). Brigade Major, 7th Aust. Inf. Bde., 1915/17; of Scotland and Northern Ireland; b. Edinburgh, Scotland, 5 July, 1884.

impracticable theories and changing enthusiasms. Any such tendencies, however, had till lately been neutralised by the practical ability of Lieutenant-Colonel Jackson, chief of the divisional staff; but he had recently been sent to Salisbury Plain to assist Monash in training the 3rd Division, and Lieutenant-Colonel Bridges,<sup>7</sup> the officer who replaced him, though a man of ability and more allied to Legge in temperament, himself possessed a theoretical outlook. Legge was not conspicuously a fighting leader of the type of Holmes or Leane; he never had the full confidence of his superiors and remained little known to his men; but he had no lack of determination, and an intensely active brain. Above all, he was a thorough Australian in heart and principle. The country owed to him, more perhaps than to any man, its fine system of compulsory citizen training; and those Australians who are aware of the fact will never forget that his own son<sup>8</sup>—whom he might easily have had raised to the rank of officer or employed in moderate safety on the staff—was killed in 1918 fighting as a private of the 2nd Division.

While the 5th Brigade—first of its division—was entering the line on July 25th, and the 6th Brigade on the night of the 26th, plans for the next important step were being matured. The general policy of the British command on this flank is set forth in an order of July 28th<sup>9</sup> as follows:

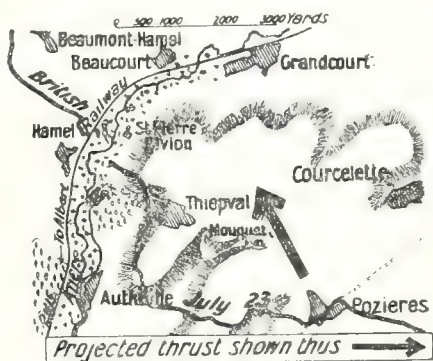
II and Anzac Corps to work systematically northwards, rolling up the German second line from about Pozières to about Grandcourt; to secure the high ground N. and N.E. of Pozières and Thiepval; to obtain observation over Courcellette and Grandcourt; to cut off, capture, or kill the German garrison of the Thiepval area.

<sup>7</sup> Col. A. H. Bridges, C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., p.s.c. G.S.O.(1), 2nd Aust. Div., 1916, 1st Aust. Div., 1916/17. Officer of Indian Regular Army; of Bath, Eng.; b. Watford, Herts., Eng., 21 April, 1871. (He was a cousin of Maj.-Gen. Sir W. T. Bridges.)

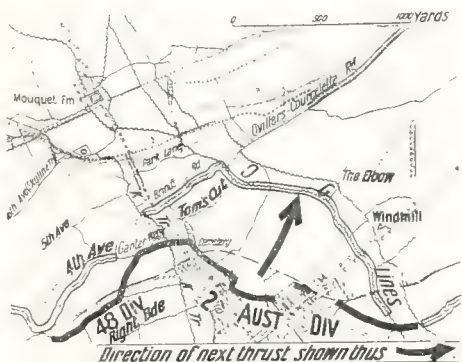
<sup>8</sup> Pte. G. F. Legge (No. 50091; 22nd Bn.). Engineering student; of Melbourne; b. Sydney, 1897. Killed in action, 4 Oct., 1918. [Several other Australian leaders had sons or brothers killed fighting as privates. A. P. Foott (of Brisbane), brother of Brig.-Gen. C. H. Foott, was killed on 17 Sept., 1917, as a private in the 1st Pioneer Battalion; F. V. Toll (of Charters Towers, Q'land), a son of Lieut.-Colonel F. W. Toll, was killed fighting as a private; H. A. Legge (of Sydney), a nephew of General Legge and brother to Major R. G. Legge, was killed as a sergeant on 3 May, 1917; Campbell Throsby (of Marathon, Q'land), first cousin to General Bridges, the founder of the A.I.F., died while serving as a private in the 7th Light Horse Regiment on 29 Feb., 1916.]

<sup>9</sup> This is quoted from an order of the II Corps, which was submitted to the staff of Reserve Army and (without alteration to the portion quoted) approved.

In this operation the I Anzac Corps was still to be responsible for the main thrust along the summit of the Second Line Ridge, the II Corps keeping pace with it as heretofore by attacking up "K" Trench, and the communication trenches west of it. But, before this northward thrust could be commenced, the crest-line east and north-east of Pozières, on which lay the formidable O.G. Lines and the ruin of the windmill, must be secured. This

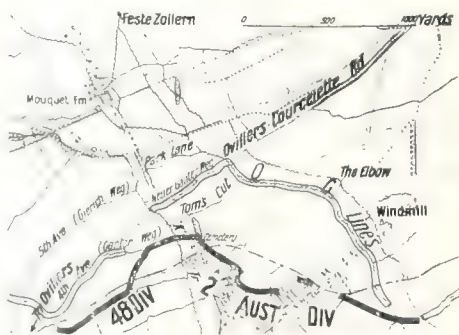


operation would be the task of the 2nd Division. If it were carried out successfully, it would throw back the Germans on to the reverse slope of the ridge, shutting them off from close observation of Pozières and opening to the British a wide vista over the country from the neighbourhood of Bapaume to that of Grandcourt.



In accordance with Haig's new policy, the operation allotted to the Anzac Corps was unrelated to those of the other corps on the battle-front, and need not—and in fact did not—take place on the same day as theirs. The Australian front line now lay along parts of the farther outskirts of the demolished village, looking out from its back-hedges across 500 to 700 yards of open ground, imperceptibly hollowed, to the crest line along which, to east and north-east, the hummocked brown parapet of O.G.1 formed the actual horizon. Just beyond O.G.1 and 2, on the north side of the main road, lay the low heap representing the remains of the windmill. At a point 500 yards north of

it the double O.G. Line bent westwards boomerang-wise (this angle being sometimes known as "The Elbow"), and, after rimming the crest for another 700 yards, terminated on the Ovillers-Courcelette road. The spur along which this road lay formed the horizon north of Pozières. Beyond it O.G.2 was incomplete, although O.G.1 continued past Mouquet Farm to the Feste Zollern. "K" Trench similarly ran towards the west of the farm, but from Pozières neither the farm nor these continuations could be seen. The space between "K" and the O.G. Lines was spanned, ladderwise, by successive German communication trenches: first, Tom's Cut (the German "Ganter Weg"), already partly captured; next, along the northern side of the Ovillers-Courcelette road, a newly-commenced excavation known to the Germans as the "Neuer Ganter Weg"; after that, a stronger trench, part of the German "Gierich Weg" (afterwards known to the Australians as "Park Lane"). The Neuer Ganter Weg (*i.e.*, part of the Ovillers-Courcelette road) was to be the objective of the 2nd Division's attack north-west of Pozières; north and east the objective would be the O.G. Lines.



The plan first proposed by Gough's staff—probably in order to conform to Haig's instruction that progress on this flank should be "methodical," which, in practice, meant piecemeal—was that of capturing the O.G. Lines by bombing up them from the south. It was suggested that the objective should be divided into four sectors, and that four battalions should undertake to capture, successively, the respective lengths. This plan, however, being scouted by General White,<sup>10</sup> it was decided to launch the main assault over the open. Birdwood's order to the 2nd Division was issued on the night

<sup>10</sup> White's comment was: "You'll use up your four battalions in attacking the first sector."



of the 26th, when Legge's headquarters was in process of transfer to Albert. There at 9 a.m. next day the staff of the 2nd Division relieved that of the 1st. At 2 p.m. a summary of the corps order was telegraphed to the three brigades. It laid down that the attack was to be by night, but the date and hour were to be fixed by the divisional commander. In the meanwhile the 1st Division's artillery, which was still covering Pozières, was to continue cutting the barbed wire in front of the enemy's position; the infantry was to establish in advance of the village a line of strong points, covering the "jumping-off" position for the attack; and unit commanders were to inspect for themselves the ground over which their troops would assault. The artillery bombardment would be arranged between the artillery commanders of the division and the corps—in collaboration, of course, with those of the Reserve Army and of the neighbouring corps and divisions that would assist.

It is to be noted that the day and hours of the attack were to be fixed by Legge. This ostensibly would ensure that the preliminary preparation was sufficient for the safety of his infantry. But both Legge and his staff were new to operations of this sort, and the pressure of General Gough, the army commander, far from being on the side of caution, was consistently exerted to hasten the date of these operations. Corps Headquarters usually endeavoured to act as a brake; and, indeed, among the conditions on this terrible front—a sector in which the horrors most typical of the Great War were crowded as densely as at Verdun—were several that might have induced a superior commander to offer the benefit of all his prudence and caution to an inexperienced subordinate. In the first place the 5th Brigade in the right sector, although ostensibly fresh, had from the moment of its entry become involved in fighting—not merely the unsuccessful attack of the 20th Battalion upon the O.G. Lines south of the road,<sup>11</sup> but the incessant local struggle of the neighbouring III Corps troops in Munster Alley. This trench had already been thrice unsuccessfully attacked by the 1st British Division.<sup>12</sup> By

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<sup>11</sup> See pp. 587-8.<sup>12</sup> See pp. 488-9, 525.

that time the nearer end of the alley and the adjoining length of O.G.2 had been so destroyed as to be barely recognisable; but the extreme right post of the Australian line was where the 5th Battalion had established it on July 25th, within a few yards of the entrance of the Alley. This was now held by a detachment of the 17th Battalion (5th Brigade); and upon ascertaining this fact the 1st British Division, now in process of being relieved by the 23rd, decided to make a final attempt to capture the alley by a new method—by bombing up it from this Australian post.

There followed a bombing struggle which, with the exception of Lone Pine, was by far the heaviest in the experience of the A.I.F. It was begun by three officers and twenty-five men of the 2nd Welch, two companies of which had been left behind by the 1st British Division to carry out the enterprise. Entering the trench through the Australian post at 2.30 p.m., and leaving a chain of their own men

strung out in the saps behind them for the purpose of passing bombs forward, they started finely, running along the top of the parapet in broad daylight and quickly bombing the enemy out of 150 yards of trench. At this stage their leading officer and sergeant were killed, and strong resistance was encountered. Both sides, now confined to the trench, continued to throw bombs steadily, while farther back—both from the German positions and also from the O.G. Lines and cross-trenches crowded with men of the Pioneers, Welch, and 17th Battalion—snipers were maintaining a constant fire upon the hands of the opposing bombers, which could be seen above the parapets of Munster Alley as bombs were thrown.

But bombing is a heavy task. Contrary to the general notion, which is based on inferences from military jargon about "attacking with the bayonet," the bomb and not the bayonet stood out as the instrument of hand-to-hand fighting in



the Great War. The influence of the bayonet lay chiefly in the dread which it aroused when employed in an overwhelming attack; but it was used mainly against unresisting men. The instrument—above all others—of heroic combat, when the two sides stood face to face under equal conditions and fought it out as men, was the bomb—seconded by the rifle or the light machine-gun. With these the battle in Munster Alley was fought, the men on each side being as dependent as the Homeric Greeks and Trojans on their sheer strength and endurance. The sun was shining, and the great heat and high excitement soon caused an overpowering thirst. Word was passed back to the Australians, first, for “bombs!” A line of the 17th Battalion was at once organised to pass them up, Captain Fussell<sup>13</sup> of the nearest company forwarding his own supply, and then sending men to the more rearward dumps. Next came a call for water, which also was sent forward. About 4 p.m. the voice of the British officer at the front was heard calling for “Anzac reinforcements.” The Australians along O.G.1 had been watching the fight, and Fussell, realising that the bombers must soon be exhausted through thirst, fatigue, and shock, had already advised his commander to send up the regimental bombing-platoon under Sergeant Lyons.<sup>14</sup> This reinforcement now went in and made a brilliant start. Making their way up the trench over the German dead and the wounded, they took the fight out of the hands of the exhausted British, drove the Germans back for another eighty yards, and there established two barricades. A machine-gun was also brought up, but it was found impossible to get it into a position suitable for keeping the enemy back.

The point now reached, some 200 yards up the alley, was held until near sunset, when onlookers observed a series of explosions causing a heavy smoke in its neighbourhood. A cry of “Gas!” was heard, and the advanced troops were seen suddenly leaving the trench and coming back. The smoke was not really gas; it appears to have been caused by a heavy discharge of bombs preceding a strong German counter-attack. Sergeant Lyons was temporarily blinded by a bullet wound

<sup>13</sup> Maj. L. G. Fussell, M.C.; 17th Bn. Bank manager; of Canberra; b. Ballarat, Vic., 3 Nov., 1883.

<sup>14</sup> Lieut. J. M. Lyons, M.C., M.M., M.S.M. Tram conductor; of Randwick, N.S.W.; b. Emmaville, N.S.W., 1887. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

and bomb-splinters. The Germans advanced and again started bombing. The Australians, whose grenade-supply had run out, were hurriedly reorganised, and a chain of all available men was strung out for a quarter of a mile through the trenches, to pass forward grenades as quickly as they could be obtained. Raising a call for volunteers, Lieutenant Matthews,<sup>15</sup> bombing officer of the 17th, went forward with a dozen men possessing some vague knowledge of bombs, and found that, although most of the alley had been lost, nine Australians<sup>16</sup> and a couple of the Welch, almost worn out, and surrounded by numbers of British, Australian, and German dead, were still throwing bombs and holding up the enemy some fifty yards beyond the original starting-point.

Matthews and his men rushed the next bend of the trench, twenty yards ahead, where a large shell-hole close outside afforded an excellent position from which bombers could check the Germans while a barricade was being built in the trench. From that crater they threw for three-quarters of an hour, outranging the enemy, whose stickbombs constantly fell six yards short, wounding men but seldom killing. Once a German leader climbed into the open and bravely strode along the parapet encouraging his men, but only to be immediately shot through the mouth. Deadly sniping from a German trench in the crater-field near the windmill was the chief danger. Shortly before dusk a bomb bursting in the trench killed two men and wounded Lieutenant Matthews. The bombers of the 17th Battalion being now in their turn killed, wounded, or exhausted, the bombing platoon of the 18th was sent in. When its members were practically all out of action,<sup>17</sup> the bombers of the 20th<sup>18</sup> took their places. Two hours later the struggle had to be taken up by volunteers and some of the bombers of the 19th.

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<sup>15</sup> Lieut. H. G. Matthews, M.C.; 17th Bn. Clerk; of Bondi, N.S.W.; b. Monkwearmouth, Durham, Eng., 1892.

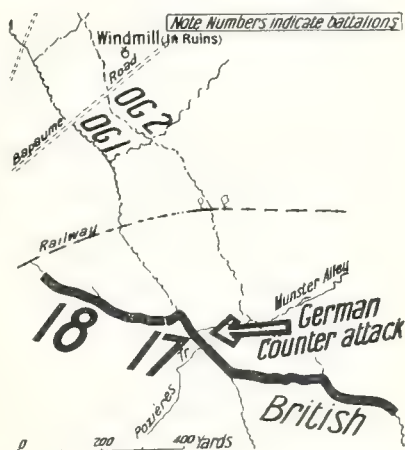
<sup>16</sup> When Sergeant Lyons was wounded, the leading "bayonet-man," Private Simon Ridley (of Braxton, N.S.W.), took his place. Ridley continued to lead, although the bomb-supply at one time entirely failed.

<sup>17</sup> Of fifty-four bombers of the 18th (including some "company bombers") only seven came out unwounded; and their officers, Lieutenants C. T. Docker (of Sydney) and A. R. Bolton-Wood (of Dulwich Hill, N.S.W.), were both hit. Private D. G. Buchanan (of Mosman, N.S.W.) is said to have been first to reach the bomb block, and to have stayed there 14 hours. Private B. W. Francis (of Drummoine, N.S.W.), 20th Battalion, also refused to retire when relieved.

<sup>18</sup> Under Lieutenant J. A. Broadbent (of Sydney).



While the struggle was in progress the British 68th Brigade (23rd Division), which had taken over the sector, relieving the 1st British Division, sent forward part of the 10th Northumberland Fusiliers to relieve the 2nd Welch. "With great difficulty," reported Brigadier-General Page Croft afterwards, "the Anzacs were persuaded to let me relieve them."<sup>19</sup> Ultimately all Australians were withdrawn to O.G.1, but fighting was presently renewed in the Alley. No precise narrative of it is available; but eventually a call for reinforcements was heard, and it was found that the British had been driven back past the junction of Munster Alley with O.G.2. At this stage, the enemy, following up, actually penetrated into the short communication trench held by the Australians, between that junction and O.G.1. The regimental bombers of the 5th Brigade having been used up almost to a man, a call was again raised for volunteers; the nearest companies of the 17th Battalion



were drawn in, and five platoons of the 18th sent up. Lieutenant Mackenzie<sup>20</sup> with volunteers from the 17th attacked, and the struggle was fierce. Lieutenant Lowther<sup>21</sup> of the 17th was killed, as was Lance-Corporal McKenzie,<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Brigadier-General Page Croft, in his book *Twenty-two Months Under Fire*, p. 230, tells the following incident: "We made great friends with the Australians, and one story perhaps may not be out of place to show the spirit of these lads from under the Southern Cross. I was walking along our trench when I discovered an Australian sitting there with a bandaged hand. I asked him what he was doing. 'Oh,' he replied, 'I am resting from our bomb fight in the Alley.' I then suggested that as he was wounded he had better go back to the dressing station and rest there, at which he replied that he was presently going back to the bomb fight. I told him that he was no good there with a damaged right hand, whereat he assured me he was left-handed. I then told him to remove his bandage, and found he had two fingers blown off by a bomb; so I then ordered him to go sick and shook his left hand. He was a brave man, but I fear that although I saw him 'off the premises' he may have returned to the bomb fight by a circuitous route."

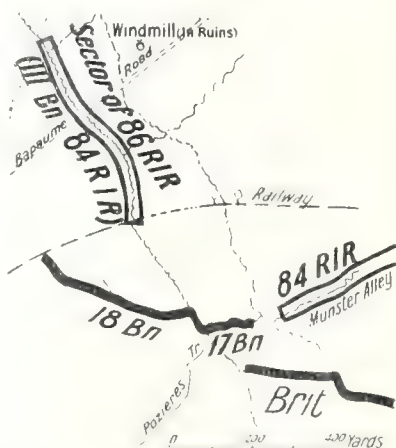
<sup>20</sup> Lieut.-Col. K. W. Mackenzie, M.C.; 17th Bn. Clerk; of Sydney; b. Bombay, India, 15 Aug., 1887.

<sup>21</sup> Lieut. E. L. Lowther; 17th Bn. Student; of Woollahra, N.S.W.; b. Woollahra, 4 Sept., 1896. Killed in action, 27 July, 1916.

<sup>22</sup> L./Cpl. H. D. McKenzie (No. 1564, 17th Bn.). Solicitor; of Sydney; b. West Maitland, N.S.W., 1887. Killed in action, 26 July, 1916.

who was leading with conspicuous bravery. Lieutenants Fay<sup>23</sup> and Mackenzie were wounded;<sup>24</sup> Lance-Corporal Wilkins<sup>25</sup> of the 18th, swinging the butt of his rifle, got among the Germans.<sup>26</sup> The trench was won back as far as the original starting-point. At this stage—it was about dawn—the fight was taken up by the 13th Durham Light Infantry which had been put in by General Page Croft to attack. They regained about sixty yards of Munster Alley, and, when fighting ceased in the morning, the British barricade was a few yards short of that made by Lieutenant Matthews and his men twelve hours before.

This attack, like that of the 5th Battalion on the morning of the 25th, came up against troops who were brought thither for a different purpose. Since the 5th Battalion's attack, the staff of the 86th German R.I.R. had discovered that a gap existed between their troops in the O.G. Lines<sup>27</sup> and those of the 84th R.I.R. in Munster Alley. The notion appears to have been entertained that the British might intend to widen this gap and use it as a "springboard" for a further attack; and the sight of "strong movements" (presumably the relief of the 3rd Australian Brigade by the 5th) in this quarter appeared to confirm this expectation. When about 5 p.m. watchers in Courcellette reported red flares (the current S.O.S. signal) rising from the direction of the gap, Lieutenant-Colonel Burmester, to meet the supposed threat, asked for a barrage and ordered up the 10th company (III/86th R.I.R.) from Courcellette. As this company under Lieutenant Ahn came up in open order, it was informed by the 84th R.I.R. that the flank was strongly threatened and that the British had already gained a footing in Munster Alley. Their attack (which is described as "stubborn") appears first to have been met by the 2nd company of the 84th and a few men of the 86th who had reached the alley on the previous



<sup>23</sup> Lieut. J. J. Fay, M.C.; 17th Bn. Engineer; of Enmore, N.S.W.; b. Newtown, N.S.W., 5 Nov., 1886.

<sup>24</sup> Major J. M. Maughan (of Edgecliff, N.S.W.) was wounded as he stood in the O.G. Lines firing flares to light the progress of the fight.

<sup>25</sup> Lieut. G. Wilkins; 18th Bn. Commission agent; of Wellington, N.S.W.; b. Mudgee, N.S.W., 23 Aug., 1885.

<sup>26</sup> Private H. C. Fitzgibbon (of Broken Hill, N.S.W.) also stood out in front of the trench throwing bombs.

<sup>27</sup> These troops were the III/84th, but had been lent to the 86th R.I.R. after its sufferings on July 25.

day. The British presently made a further advance in the alley, but about this stage Lieutenant Ahn relieved the 84th at the scene of the fighting. At dusk his company in turn was relieved by the 84th for an hour; it then went in again. At 10 p.m., supported by another platoon of the 84th, the Germans counter-attacked without any previous bombardment, but under cover of a sudden discharge of bombs, and cleared the alley. From then onwards the 84th was responsible for the fighting.

At the time when the British relieved the Australians, German listeners, who were sent to lie near the Australian lines and report any signs of impending renewal of the attack, returned with news of some movement. The Germans assumed that an assault was intended, and afterwards believed that it had been checked by their machine-guns. The German official account states that the attack which about dawn penetrated the Australian line was made by part of the III/84th R.I.R. down the O.G. Lines, as well as by the I/84th from Munster Alley. By dawn parts of at least seven companies had been used. The tired I/84th was relieved by the II/84th, which continued to sustain the fight.

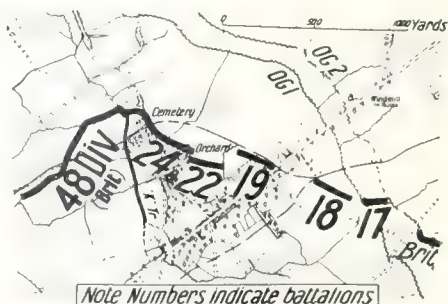
The struggle had lasted twelve and a half hours; the Germans had used every sort of grenade, cricket-ball, stick-bomb, egg-bomb, in thousands, as well as rifle-grenades, some of which fell among the Australians at a considerable range. As the ground had not been reconnoitred, the Australian Stokes mortars could not be used till the morning. Lieutenant Kemmis<sup>28</sup> then brought one into action in O.G.I; but after firing for some time with good effect it, together with the officer and crew, was blown to pieces by a heavy explosion. On the British side 15,000 bombs had been thrown. The regimental bombers of the 5th Australian Brigade had been used up—among those of the 17th, only one could still stand on his feet. And yet the struggle in Munster Alley had barely begun. The truth was that the morale of the German soldier was still unaffected; his training and organisation for bomb-fighting were excellent; his supply of grenades ample; and—though different contingents varied—taken all round, when it came to a hand-to-hand struggle in a branch of warfare in which the predominating artillery of the Allies did not greatly affect him, he was every whit as good a man as the best of his opponents.

While part of the 5th Brigade, ostensibly fresh, had thus subjected itself to considerable strain by "buying in" (to use an Australianism) to a struggle on its flank, its 19th Battalion.

<sup>28</sup> Lieut. W. S. Kemmis, 19th Bn. Dentist; of Sydney; b. Parramatta, N.S.W., 3 Sept., 1886. Killed in action, 27 July, 1916.

holding the east end of Pozières, and the 24th and 22nd Battalions (6th Brigade), occupying the trenches bordering the east, north, and west of the town, were being subjected to a continuation of the dreadful bombardment that had been poured upon Pozières for the past fortnight, first by one side and now by the other. Before the first Australian attack the impression obtained by a spectator was that all the houses and barns of the village had been levelled with the ground. The bombardments of the

following week had the strange effect of bringing some of them again into view by destroying the trees and stripping the tree-stumps that had partly screened them. The village site had now been laid bare; to anyone who penetrated thither, it looked like some wide area laid open for the "shooting" of ashes and rubble, from which the broken remains of a wall or the skeleton framework of a fallen roof stood out in one or two places. But these last remains were now gradually disappearing under the pounding by which soil and débris alike were ground to powder. At this stage of the fighting, no front trench could be maintained near the main road for more than a day; all that were dug there were quickly filled in by the bombardment. Consequently, at the the line of the main road, all incoming or outgoing troops had to pass over the open before again entering the shelter of trenches. The Germans, although they saw this movement, did not snipe actively, fearing to draw increased bombardment upon their positions—a consideration which, during these weeks of strain, kept the Australian snipers also inactive. But the German barrage constantly descended on the line of the main road, and the banks and shell-holes of Dead Man's road near its junction with the main road were littered with corpses. During the whole of this tour of the 2nd Division the weather was continuously fine and dry, the open battlefield shimmering at midday under an almost Australian glare.





Many a wayfarer, passing Dead Man's road and emerging upon the Pozières plateau during intervals in the bombardment when nothing stirred and no sign of man, animal, insect, or verdure was visible, must have been reminded of those wastes of the Libyan Desert around Mena Camp into which the Australians had often wandered. An Australian who on July 31st inspected the whole Anzac front from the cemetery on the left to the tramway and copse at the east end of the village (following the route shown in the marginal map) has left a detailed description of which the following is an extract. Commencing with the approach to the village up Dead Man's road and past Gibraltar, he says :

The route was like a road through a desert. Nearly half the way I was going through deserted trenches along which the dead lay sometimes in batches of 10 and 12 together. . . . You strike the dead on the Chalk Pit Road (Dead Man's Road) before getting to the 21st Battalion headquarters (Gibraltar). There I was told to go straight along the road (the track past Gibraltar) and I should find a communication trench. There was not a soul in sight—only the powdered grey earth of the craters with a trodden path through it. I went first up the track to the right—but it seemed to me I was getting too much into the centre of the village. By me was a filled-in trench—no shelter whatsoever in it, and two bigish shells fell straight ahead. No signs of any trench of ours—all as still and dead as a deserted ash-heap. I turned back and followed the goat-track path to the right. (Actually the commencement of "K" Trench demolished by the bombardment near the main road.) There were only blackened dead—and occasionally bits of men—torn bits of limbs, unrecognisable—along it. I wandered on for five minutes without seeing a sign of anyone till I came to a gradually improving trench—quite deserted—peopled only by dead men half buried—some sitting upright with bandaged heads—apparently little hurt except for the bandaged wound—others lying half-covered in little holes they had scratched in the trench side. There were deserted tools.

I was going down a slope and the country was quite open ahead of me—a gentle up-slope on which there must have been German trenches. I knew the track must be used, because it was trodden, but it might have been (used only) at night. At last I came on some



Pioneers hurrying back—5 of them. They said the Middlesex were ahead, and then some of our trench-mortar men. I went on again over battered trench and into deep hollows of good trench—switch-back like—hurrying to avoid a machine-gun which could have caught me any time—but it seemed ages before the trench was peopled. At last I came to the end of the dead men—and into a decent trench held by the living—British, and through them to Australians—21st Battalion at our extreme left. . . .

This part of the front had by that date been advanced beyond the point where the 2nd Division had found it, and the trenches had been improved and detached lengths connected; but, with certain modifications, the passages quoted below give a vivid impression of the front as it was when the division entered it. The diarist describes it from the extreme left, working towards the right:

One could look out on the cup (the wide shallow depression lying between the Australian and the O.G. Lines). . . . The men were crowded on the floor of these narrow trenches, and one had to step over them—but on the whole the trenches were good. . . . I saw the cemetery . . . a few battered stones marked it. Wherever you left the trench there were a few dead men. . . . The trench curved round, quite good, until it struck the old German gun dugouts which are shown on the map. These were occupied where it crosses them, but not beyond. Shortly after, it petered out in the back hedge of the houses north of the main road. The 5th Brigade came next, but their trenches were 100 yards away. . . . The only way was to crawl behind the hedge until one reached the trench. Their stretcher-bearers were sniped there so it was necessary to be careful. . . .

It was an eerie feeling clambering over craters behind the hedge, with no sign of any trench anywhere or of any living thing. I . . . presently found the wall of a house in front of me. I clambered over the broken bricks. The windmill, where they say the Germans have observation, was always unpleasantly obvious ahead. However, as I got through the house I saw a tramway . . . and beyond that a line of new earth . . . and dropped into a good deep narrow trench. There were men in it, and quite close was 19th Bn. Headquarters.

The men there were dreadfully tired. They had been in for seven days and were nearly at the end of their powers. In a deep dugout I found little Sherbon<sup>29</sup>—he had his machine gunners down there resting. They have had no fight—they have simply had to hang on in the line cut (*i.e.*, traversed) by the German barrage. The southern end of it by the road is quite knocked to bits—they can't keep men there at all . . . they are quite cut off from right and left except for journeys overground. There they live and are slowly pounded to death—they think there are only 250 of the battalion left but I believe there are more. I had a French (news) paper which I left with them—they were delighted to get it.

<sup>29</sup> Maj. I. B. Sherbon, M.C.; 19th Bn. Clerk; of La Perouse, N.S.W.; b. Forest Lodge, N.S.W., 16 Feb., 1893. Killed in action, 14 Nov., 1916.

The way out was complicated, so I took their offer of a guide named Welsh<sup>30</sup>—I didn't like to, but I don't think I should have found the way. You have to go across craters to the main road of the village and then down it and turn to the left. The guide himself got astray. There was a sort of a track to the road (one could just recognise that it *was* a road by its curious straightness), but across the road there was just one wilderness of friable grey craters, so shredded and dry that it looked most like an ancient ash-heap in which the hens have been scratching for years—musty, dusty, god-forsaken, dry potholes of grey sifted earth. They say that a shell now does little harm falling in this stuff. Everywhere were blackened men—torn and whole—dead for days. About eight or ten big black shrapnel were thrown over as we went, but they were far behind us. At last the guide recognised the remains of a hedge to the left of us. We had gone too far, and we saw the dry white pad leading along a broken trench (Copse Avenue) . . . we ducked under the railway. I knew my way now, so the runner left me—I hope he got home safe—good chap. . . .

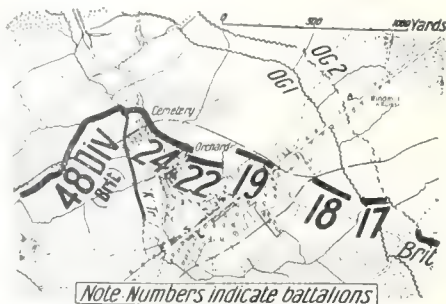
The trench of the 19th Battalion had been under almost continuous shell-fire from July 25th onwards. But the bombardment which had mainly contributed towards filling "K" Trench with dead men had occurred on July 27th, just after the 6th Brigade's entry. It was at noon on July 26th that a German artillery observer pointed out to his superiors that trenches, evidently designed for a new offensive, were being dug on the northern side of Pozières. The German shell-fire next day was not so general, or its volume so great, as in the special bombardment on the evening of the 26th; but it was concentrated on these trenches.<sup>31</sup> The 6th Brigade had reached Pozières at 9 o'clock on the previous night, after a tiring march from the Brickfields west of Albert. On arriving at the village it had passed through a casual barrage and then settled with half its 22nd and 24th Battalions in the front line, half of them in close support—mainly along "K" Trench—and the 21st and 23rd in the rear area in reserve, the former acting as carriers of food and supplies to the line. The units were at full strength and the trenches were consequently crowded when at 9 a.m. on the 27th a bombardment began. Its target was obviously the occupied line on three sides of Pozières, but, except in

<sup>30</sup> Probably Pte. B. Walshe (No. 1604; 19th Bn.), who was wounded on that day.

<sup>31</sup> A German map is in existence dated 27 July 1916 and shows the concentration of the fire of light and medium trench-mortars from the quarry near Mouquet Farm upon "K" Trench and the new front line north of Pozières.



the 19th Battalion sector, most of the shells at first passed over the front line. As the day went on the aim was corrected, and by the afternoon both trench-mortar bombs and shells were bursting frequently in the trenches. The southern end of the 19th Battalion's position near the main road was levelled. The companies



of the 22nd around the orchard and cemetery suffered less; but its company and those of the 24th in "K" Trench were murderously hit. Except at its northern end near the cemetery this trench had no deep dugouts, and the troops were sheltered only in small recesses—some of them dug by the Germans—in the trench-side. They had no duty but to remain there hour after hour. The position being considered unnecessarily crowded, 100 men were eventually withdrawn; the remainder could do nothing, except sit in the trench waiting to be killed or buried by the collapsing banks, and then to be dug out and buried again. Some tried to occupy their minds by playing cards.<sup>32</sup>

The company of the 22nd in this trench lost all its officers and a great part of its men through this bombardment; and so great was the carnage in the 24th<sup>33</sup> that for months afterwards, even when "K" Sap had been almost obliterated, its course could easily be traced by half-buried bodies with the red and white colours of that battalion still showing on their arms. At the eastern end of the village the 19th Battalion had been as heavily bombarded; and the old semicircular trench of the 11th and 12th Battalions behind the northern hedge of the village (named by Lieutenant Wallach of the

<sup>32</sup> It is related in the history of the 24th Battalion (*The Red and White Diamond*, p. 95) that an officer passing along "K" Trench saw four men playing at cards. On the parapet above them was the body of their sergeant who had been playing with them, his "hand", when he was killed, being taken by a mate. When the officer passed that way again, those four men were dead.

<sup>33</sup> Lieutenant A. J. Kerr (of Camberwell, Vic.) of this battalion was killed by one of the first shells to fall.



19th "Blancmange Trench," because it changed shape every time he visited it) had been so shattered that, after attempting to occupy it for a night, the 19th withdrew its men to the Tramway Trench. There the deep German "Medical Dugout" (adopted by Lieutenant-Colonel Mackenzie<sup>34</sup> as battalion headquarters) afforded shelter for a large part of the garrison, and also precious bandages and splints for the wounded.

The German official history (*Somme Nord*) merely states that the trenches and approaches of Pozières were this day kept under the fire of the German artillery.

The conditions on the Pozières plateau might thus have demanded caution, rather than haste, in the planning of further offensives; but even stronger reason for deliberation was afforded by another circumstance. The artillery commander of the 1st Division, whose batteries had been charged with cutting the entanglement in front of the German lines, had reported that on July 26th the haze and dust raised by the German bombardment had made reliable observation almost impossible.<sup>35</sup> The artillery of the 1st Division was being supplemented by two incoming brigades of the 2nd Division, and six batteries would be cutting wire on July 27th. Legge and his staff were confident that preparations would be completed by the night of the 28th; the army commander was eager for early attack; the atmosphere was one of extreme optimism. At Corps headquarters General White, though full of misgiving, for once allowed the confidence of others to bear down his own judgment, and the date fixed by Legge was approved. No other part of the battle-front would be especially active that night, but the Fourth Army was arranging to deliver the postponed attack on Guillemont—in conjunction with a French operation—on the morning of July 30th, and to attack with parts of four divisions the German positions north of Longueval and Bazentin the following evening.

The shortness of time available for the Australian attack caused two serious difficulties in the preparation; first, the

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<sup>34</sup> Colonel W. K. S. Mackenzie, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 19th Bn., 1915/17. Barrister-at-law; of Sydney; b. Sydney, 7 Jan., 1872.

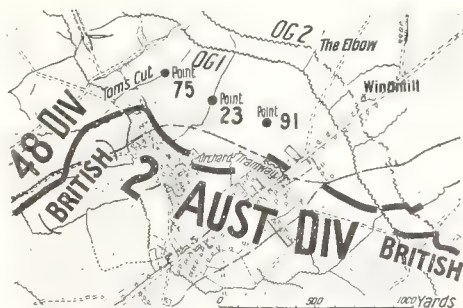
<sup>35</sup> At the hour of his report matters were a little better—the observer could see some of the wire and had two batteries firing at it.

field artillery had little chance of ascertaining whether its efforts to break down the German wire had been successful. The entanglements were not being fired upon by the heavy artillery, which was regarded rather as an instrument for demolishing trenches. So terrible was its power in that respect that, at this stage of the war, the siege batteries were constantly ordered to "level" the trenches fired at—that is, to demolish them so completely that they would be filled in and no trace of them left. Such a proceeding does not seem to have been thought necessary for the O.G. Lines, the artillery staff being apparently confident that the enemy's trenches and machine-guns could be sufficiently damaged by a slighter bombardment.

The method then employed by the field artillery in breaking down the enemy's wire was to thresh it with low-burst shrapnel—a practice based on British experience and experiment in 1915. There was wire not only in front of O.G.1, but also farther back, in front of O.G.2, and this second belt was in parts hidden from the forward artillery observers. The Australian batteries were also at a disadvantage in being unable to approach closer than 3,000 yards from their target without great risk of coming under direct observation and being destroyed. Under these conditions, on July 26th, the Australian field batteries fired 900 rounds at those parts of the wire that they could see; on the 27th they were allotted 1,800 rounds, and on the 28th 2,200, for the same purpose. Aeroplanes were asked to report, if possible, how far the entanglement had been broken. On the night of the 27th an infantry patrol of the 6th Brigade found part of the wire north of Pozières well cut; one from the 5th Brigade reported that north-east of the village the wire of O.G.1 was "considerably damaged" but "strong in places" and "still an obstacle." The second difficulty caused by lack of time lay in the impossibility of digging a "jumping-off" trench within easy striking distance of the objective. No connected trench existed even around Pozières; that dug by the 3rd and 1st Brigades a day or two previously through the garden enclosures north of the village was so much destroyed as to be barely traceable on air photographs. It was hoped that before the night of the attack a trench-line might

be excavated along the old field railway which curved round the farther side of the village, but even this would be 400 to 600 yards from the objective—much too distant to afford a safe “jumping-off” position. In spite of G.H.Q.’s warning<sup>36</sup> that no attack could hope for success if the starting position was more than 200 yards from the objective, lack of time rendered it hopeless to think of digging a “jumping-off” trench within that distance of the O.G. Lines. All that Birdwood could order was that strong-posts should at once be established forward of the railway as “rallying points,” and that the troops should be advanced as close as possible to their objectives before the actual assault.

As the orders from the 2nd Division did not reach the brigades until the afternoon of the 27th, there remained only that night in which the intended trench along the tramway and the strong-points could be dug. The 1st Division had already established small forward posts in front of the north of Pozzières, and the 6th Brigade attempted to improve these and connect them with a line of trench which, being also extended westward to “K” Sap, would form a “jumping-off” trench much closer to the objective than the Tramway Trench.<sup>37</sup> Heavy fire, however, prevented this from being done, and indeed so delayed the engineers—who were trying to discover the flank of the 5th Brigade in order to peg out the Tramway Trench—that they did not locate the flank until dawn, when it was too late to start digging. Consequently in the northern sector, beyond strengthening the two outposts (known, by the figures which designated them on the map, as Points 75 and 23) and deepening part of an old German trench (a branch of Tom’s Cut) leading to the more northerly one, nothing was achieved. In the 5th Brigade’s sector, however, the Tramway Trench had



<sup>36</sup> See p. 338.

<sup>37</sup> This was the usual name of the trench dug along the railway.

been marked out by Lieutenants Marshall<sup>38</sup> and Weedon<sup>39</sup> of the 19th Battalion up to a point at which they were fired upon by the 6th Brigade from the orchard, and the southern half of the trench, with well-planned square traverses, was duly dug by working parties of the 18th Battalion. The night was a disturbed one, the artillery of both sides firing heavily, and in the 18th Captain Coen<sup>40</sup> and Lieutenant Picôt<sup>41</sup> were, among others, killed, and Lieutenants Bolton-Wood<sup>42</sup> and Porter<sup>43</sup> wounded.<sup>44</sup> An unemployed surplus of the working party, crowding the avenues to the front, delayed part of the 7th Field company under Lieutenant Cartwright,<sup>45</sup> which was charged with establishing the strong-point in front of this sector. At midnight, however, the engineers got through, and at 2 a.m. Captain Kirke of the 18th brought up a small party of infantry with picks and shovels, which before daylight dug a short isolated trench—thenceforth known as "Strongpoint 91."<sup>46</sup> In rear of Pozières the communication trenches dug by the 1st Division were being improved as far as was possible in the time for the passage of the attacking battalions on the next evening.

Dawn of Friday, July 28th, therefore saw the three advanced posts in position, and behind them a trench running about a quarter of the way round the circuit of the railway. The preparatory bombardment by the heavy artillery was carried out during that day, not continuously, but at intervals, the siege batteries attached to I Anzac<sup>47</sup> firing 800 shells upon the O.G. Lines from the Bapaume road up to The Elbow,<sup>48</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Capt. A. Marshall, D.S.O.; 19th Bn. Clerk; of Goulburn, N.S.W.; b. Wilcannia, N.S.W., 29 May, 1883.

<sup>39</sup> Lieut. J. F. W. Weedon, 19th Bn. Auctioneer; of Sydney and Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.; b. Queensland, 13 Aug., 1889.

<sup>40</sup> Capt. F. Coen, 18th Bn. Barrister-at-law; of Yass, N.S.W.; b. Yass, 29 Jan., 1884. Killed in action, 28 July, 1916.

<sup>41</sup> Lieut. T. A. E. Picôt, 18th Bn. Salesman; of Vaucluse, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 10 Jan., 1893. Killed in action, 28 July, 1916.

<sup>42</sup> Capt. A. R. Bolton-Wood, M.C.; 20th Bn. Clerk; of Dulwich Hill, N.S.W.; b. Dulwich Hill, 3 Aug., 1895. Died of wounds, 5 Nov., 1917.

<sup>43</sup> Lieut. A. McP. Porter, 18th Bn. Joiner; of Miranda, N.S.W.; b. East Maitland, N.S.W., 26 Feb., 1891.

<sup>44</sup> Major G. F. Murphy of the 18th was also wounded when reconnoitring in front of the line near the strong-post dug by his battalion.

<sup>45</sup> Capt. J. H. Cartwright, M.C.; 6th Fld. Coy. Engrs. Architect and surveyor; of Melbourne; b. Gibraltar, 1883. Died of wounds, 2 Sept., 1918.

<sup>46</sup> This was forthwith garrisoned by twenty men with a Lewis gun.

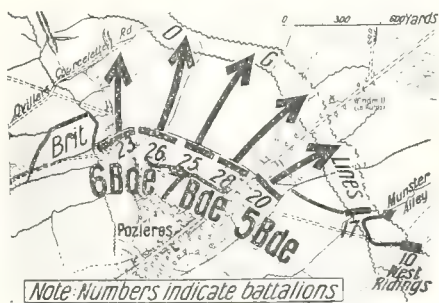
<sup>47</sup> 45th Heavy Artillery Group, at this stage comprising the 36th, 55th (Australian), and 108th Siege Batteries. The 54th (Australian) joined on July 31.

<sup>48</sup> The 6-inch howitzers fired a total of 400 shells upon O.G.2, and the 8-inch and 9.2's a total of 200 each on O.G.1. The 8-inch fired on the northern half of the sector and the 9.2-inch on the southern half.



while those of the II Corps fired on the O.G. Lines north-west of The Elbow, as far as the Ovillers-Courcelette road.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile a hurried reconnaissance was being made by those charged with leading the attack, especially by the officers of the 7th Brigade, which had not yet occupied any part of this front, but which would that night be inserted by Legge between his two other brigades to carry out the main part of the task, the 5th and 6th Brigades merely advancing on its flanks. As the 7th was still bivouacking at Tara Hill, General Paton, with Major Rowan-Hamilton and the four battalion commanders, met at 6 a.m. at the head of Sausage Valley, and, after Paton issued his instructions, went forward to view the ground. The company commanders, Lewis and machine-gun officers, and bomb-officers also made a reconnaissance, for which—seeing that this brigade had never before engaged in a major operation—the time was all too short. On Paton's return at 1 p.m. the detailed operation order from divisional headquarters was found to have arrived. He explained it to his subordinates, and, between 6 and 7.30 p.m., the brigade began to move from Tara Hill towards its assembly positions.

From left to right the attacking force was as follows. The 6th Brigade (all Victorian), with a comparatively narrow objective—the line of the Ovillers-Courcelette road,<sup>50</sup> north of Pozieres—was making its main advance with one battalion. The 22nd and 24th, having suffered too severely by shell-fire, General Gellibrand entrusted the task to the 23rd,<sup>51</sup> till then in reserve, keeping, however, parts of both the others in close support. General



Paton of the 7th Brigade, on which fell the main attack against the O.G. Lines from the Ovillers-Courcelette road to

<sup>49</sup> If the allotment of ammunition to these batteries was on the same scale as that allowed to the Anzac artillery, it amounted to 1,200 shells, making a total of 2,000 shells fired at the O.G. Lines during the day.

<sup>50</sup> Tom's Cut was to be occupied as a first objective.

<sup>51</sup> The 21st had been carrying.

the Bapaume road, was assaulting with three battalions—the 26th (Queensland and Tasmania) on the left, 25th (Queensland) in centre, and 28th (Western Australia) on the right—keeping the 27th (South Australia) in reserve. The capture of the O.G. Lines south of the Bapaume road was regarded as a subsidiary operation. This portion was not to be bombarded except with trench mortars, which would fire for five minutes after the attack farther north had been launched. North of the “Tramway” this sector would then be seized by half a battalion of the 5th Brigade; after its capture the short length of O.G.2 intervening between the railway and Munster Alley would be secured by bombing from both ends. For the assaulting half-battalion General Holmes chose the 20th, of which two companies had already unsuccessfully attacked the same sector on the night of the 26th. The 17th Battalion, which was holding the foremost Australian posts in the O.G. Lines, would bomb towards it.

As already mentioned, no important attack was being launched by the British that night in any other part of the battlefield. On the previous day fierce fighting had occurred; Delville Wood had been cleared and Longueval recaptured, and on this night the Germans, as it happened, attempted their recapture but failed. The brigade on the immediate right of the Australians was making another attempt upon Munster Alley; but on the Australian left no move was contemplated unless the Australians succeeded.

The journey of the Australian troops to this assembly position was, in the case of the 7th Brigade, a long one; but, apparently with a view of avoiding dislocation through stirring up the enemy's artillery, the supporting batteries were ordered to maintain only a “normal” fire after dusk. The heavy batteries had already finished their preparatory shelling. Further, to deceive the enemy it had been arranged by the artillery commanders that the attack should be preceded by only three minutes' intense barrage (12.12–12.15 a.m.), and that for twelve minutes before this (from midnight to 12.12) the artillery should be absolutely silent. Legge, however, fearing—not without reason—that this silence might render the enemy suspicious, secured an alteration, by which the artillery was to continue to fire “normally” until one

minute before the assault (12.14 a.m.). The intense barrage would then be laid by six Australian artillery brigades<sup>52</sup> for one minute upon O.G.1. At 12.15 they would lengthen range and O.G.1 would be attacked by two waves of infantry. From 12.15 the barrage would fall for ten minutes at a slower rate<sup>53</sup> on O.G.2. The guns would then again lift 100 yards, and the third and fourth waves, which would have passed over O.G.1 and lain down as close as possible to the line of barrage, would assault O.G.2. On the northern front, the field artillery of the 25th Division, which was covering the 6th Brigade, would lay its barrage throughout on the cross-trench (Park Lane) about 200 yards north of the Ovillers-Courcelette road. On the other flank, south of Pozières windmill, the bombardment of the objective was being left entirely to the trench mortars, but the artillery of the 34th Division would cover the front of the 5th Brigade with a barrage on the Bapaume road and in rear of O.G.2.<sup>54</sup>

The night was quiet, and, in spite of the haste in preparation, the allotted battalions of the 6th and 7th Brigades reached and occupied their starting positions in the dark with remarkable success, guides for the 7th Brigade being provided by the 5th, which was holding the greater part of the front from which the 7th would attack. Fortunately the old light railway, on which the brigadiers had been advised to align their troops, afforded an excellent assembly position, since it faced each part of the objective. The units had received orders that, when thus assembled, they must lie down in the trench, where it was available, or in shell-holes, until about fifteen minutes before the hour for the assault; at that juncture, however, since the railway was too far from the objective, they must advance so as to be close to the enemy trench when the short intense bombardment ended.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 21st Brigades of 1st Division, and the 5th and 6th of 2nd Division.

<sup>53</sup> Two rounds shrapnel per field-gun per minute.

<sup>54</sup> This artillery was also specially asked to leave the windmill clear.

<sup>55</sup> This method, it will be remembered, had been adopted at Fromelles—indeed it had been employed by some British divisions at least a year before—*e.g.*, by the 6th British Division on 9 Aug. 1915 at Hooge. On that occasion, however, as at Fromelles, the bombardment was of much longer duration than that preceding this attack by the 2nd Australian Division and the troops made their movement into No-Man's Land under cover of it.

During this fight the headquarters of the 6th and 7th Brigades were in two neighbouring deep dugouts in Sausage Valley, that of the 5th being rather nearer the front, in Contalmaison. From all three headquarters, as the eyes of many anxious watchers at midnight scanned the northern horizon, the white flares (those of the Germans, since the Australians seldom used them) were seen gracefully rising and drooping. The alarm of the bombardment would, of course, at once stir sheaves of coloured flares—signals from the German garrison to its artillery; but when once the position was captured, there would be an absence of lights along the captured sector, and this was the sign which was always most eagerly watched for. One observer noted in his diary:

12.14. One minute intense bombardment. Never heard anything quite like it. A fair amount of machine-gun fire in several places before this started.

12.15. Noticeable lift (of barrage). Both red and green flares going constantly.

Up to 12.25. Enemy has been firing a good many flares but there are less of them in what I take to be the Pozières position.

12.55. Flares still going—red flares too . . . .

1.35. Red flares still being thrown up . . . rifle or machine-gun fire could be heard.

The continuance of enemy flares was alarming and puzzling; but such information as could thus be gleaned concerning the progress of the attack was, as usual, all that brigade headquarters obtained for nearly two hours. The numerous telephone wires laid to advanced report centres were instantly cut, and although lamp signals had been arranged for they could not be seen.

2.25. Still red lights over Pozières way. Shelling a good deal lighter. Our 1st Division gunners are just about worn out. No word yet. Visual signalling station up near Chalk Pit reports that it thought it could see a light once, but all in front of it is dust and smoke. . . .

Uncertain reports, however, had by then begun to arrive. At 2 a.m. a signaller reported that he had heard from some one else that the attack "didn't altogether come off." At 2.7 a messenger, Private H. W. Cooper,<sup>56</sup> from the 28th Battalion,

<sup>56</sup> Pte. H. W. Cooper, D.C.M. (No. 605, 28th Bn.). Miner; of Boulder and Perth, W. Aust.; b. Clent, Worcs., Eng., 18 Feb., 1889.



in spite of a hit that knocked out one of his eyes, pluckily limped into brigade headquarters to report that the 28th Battalion had assembled successfully, but that he had heard rifle-fire open four minutes before the starting of the intense bombardment. At about 3.15 definite news began to arrive and to arrive thickly, to the effect that Captain Nix<sup>57</sup> of the 25th had returned to his battalion headquarters, wounded, and reported that after entering the first objective he had been beaten back with heavy loss; that (taking the battalions from right to left) the 20th, south of the Bapaume road, had been seen by the enemy before the attack started, and had failed; that, north of the road, the 28th had been "hung up" on a belt of wire, and the 25th and 26th driven back after entering O.G.I; but that the 23rd (6th Brigade) on the left had succeeded, and, although part had gone too far, was now digging a trench (said to be already four feet deep) beside the Ovillers-Courcelette road.

General Paton, impressed with the hopelessness of continuing the assault, and wishing to avoid the loss likely to be caused by men, after retirement, crowding the trenches around Pozières, forthwith sent an instruction to all battalions of the 7th Brigade to withdraw and reorganise south of Pozières. This action, however, threatened to leave the flank of the 6th Brigade, then still digging out on the Ovillers-Courcelette road, in a dangerously exposed position. Gellibrand therefore at once ordered a reserve company of the 6th Brigade to support the threatened flank. Later information, throwing doubt on that already received, caused the transmission of a series of useless instructions.<sup>58</sup> While, however, generals were endeavouring on this basis of scanty information to frame measures which almost inevitably, were in most cases adapted to the situation only as it had been several hours before, the course of the operation had already been determined by the action mainly of company and platoon

<sup>57</sup> Capt. J. E. Nix, 25th Bn. Journalist; of Charters Towers, Q'land; b. Hillgrove, N.S.W., 23 July, 1891. Killed in action, 5 Nov., 1916.

<sup>58</sup> A report from the 25th made it appear possible that three of its companies might still be in O.G.I. Orders were sent to retain them there and endeavour to join up with them. But the original inference proved incorrect.

commanders at the front. The detailed story of that night's events, as it ultimately trickled through, was as follows.

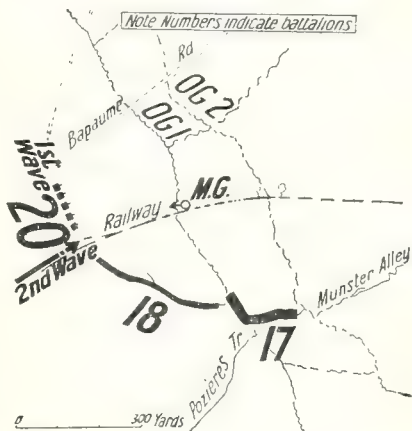
An omission from the plan of attack had proved disastrous. As was said above, through lack of an advanced "jumping-off" line it was necessary for the waves, first, to be assembled near the tramway before midnight, and, second, about that hour to rise and advance across the open basin in front of the O.G. Lines, so as to be within striking distance of their objectives by 12.14, when the intense barrage would, for one minute, burst upon O.G.I. If a heavy bombardment had during the interval been raining on the German trenches, this approach might have been made without detection, or at least the Germans might have been forced to keep down their heads. But—to avoid the enemy's counter-barrage—it had been arranged that the artillery-fire during these fourteen minutes should be only sufficient to prevent the enemy from remarking an absolute silence. Consequently, when at midnight the waves of the 7th Brigade went forward from the tramway in excellent formation, at fifty yards' interval, the Germans, who constantly lighted this battlefield with their flares, presently observed a portion of the advancing line. Each infantryman of the 2nd Division had a small plaque of bright tin sewn on the centre of his back, as a means of recognition by airmen and artillery. Although extremely unpopular with the men, who considered that it afforded an equally good mark for the enemy, this device was enforced by an order from Corps Headquarters.<sup>59</sup> The theory, widely held at the time and since, that it was the flashing of these plaques which attracted the enemy's attention, has no support in the available evidence;<sup>60</sup> but the troops were convinced that it was so, and went through this fight with the feeling that by some one's folly they carried these flashing targets between their shoulder-blades wherever they went.

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<sup>59</sup> This order had been modified to the extent of allowing the troops to cover these discs and show them only when required; the modification, however, had not reached the troops.

<sup>60</sup> German records merely say that "concentrations" of troops were seen.

Even before 12 p.m. undoubtedly the enemy had seen the leading troops of the 20th Battalion (5th Brigade) filing out to its assembly position south of the Bapaume road. Here the troops had to cross the railway near its fork at a place where it was slightly embanked; half of the leading wave had settled into position, and the second wave was crossing this prominence when, at 11.40, the enemy opened on them with a machine-gun from the right front. Flares began to rise more thickly from that corner; other machine-guns farther north joined in; and presently a barrage of high-explosive, phosgene, and tear-shell descended, by which the movement was absolutely stopped. The subalterns endeavoured to shift their platoons gradually forward from crater to crater, so as to avoid the barrage, but the enemy's flares now rose

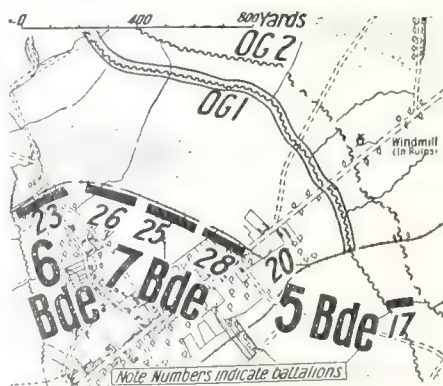


continuously, turning night into day, and the hail from the machine-guns in the area about the main road was so fierce that, when the hour for the attack arrived, any advance was obviously hopeless, and none was made. The troops lay out until 3 a.m., when the machine-gun fire subsided, and in the comparatively quiet hour before the dawn most of them were withdrawn.<sup>61</sup> The assault party of the 17th Battalion also had been detected climbing out to bomb up O.G.2, and was heavily fired on.<sup>62</sup> As no sign was seen of the 20th's attack, the bombing assault was not launched. Thus the attack of the 5th Brigade was undelivered. The casualties were 6 officers and 140 men, chiefly of the 20th Battalion.

<sup>61</sup> A number of wounded, however, still lay out. Sergeant C. C. Castleton (of South Lowestoft, Suffolk, England) of the 5th Machine Gun Company made constant journeys into No-Man's Land to bring them back, and was eventually killed at this work. He was posthumously rewarded with the Victoria Cross.

<sup>62</sup> Captain L. K. Chambers (of Mosman, N.S.W.), 17th Battalion, was killed while speaking to his company commander.

North of the road the 7th Brigade—28th, 25th, and 26th Battalions (in that order from right to left)—had assembled in the open along Tramway Trench, and lain down, wave behind wave, waiting for the signal. In the 5th and 7th Brigades the first two waves were to capture O.G.1, and the third and fourth to go on to O.G.2. The companies in all three brigades were on this occasion formed in depth; that is to say, each battalion attacked with its



four companies in line, each company having one of its platoons in the first wave and the three others in succession behind it.<sup>63</sup> All commanders had been warned that the Bapaume road was constantly shelled and therefore dangerous, but it could not be avoided by the battalion nearest to it, the 28th. One shell falling on the head of that unit killed a company commander, Major Welch,<sup>64</sup> and mortally wounded one of his subalterns, Lieutenant Ellis.<sup>65</sup> Lieutenant B. A. Bell<sup>66</sup> was hurriedly sent from another company to take charge. Touch was found on both flanks with the neighbouring battalions, and the waves had been lying out for a quarter of an hour when the machine-gun awakened by the 20th south of the road was heard. A quarter of an hour later, at midnight, the first wave rose and moved forward, followed, when it had gone fifty yards, by the second, and at further intervals of fifty yards by the third and fourth. By the flashes of the occasional shells the extended lines of troops could every now and then be seen moving steadily forward across the whole basin. They had been advancing

<sup>63</sup> A small number of engineers went with the third or fourth waves.

<sup>64</sup> Maj. L. B. Welch, 28th Bn. Civil servant; of Subiaco, W. Aust.; b. Clunes, Vic., 23 Oct., 1881. Killed in action, 28 July, 1916.

<sup>65</sup> Lieut. F. W. Ellis, 28th Bn. Fireman; of Yarloop, W. Aust.; b. Devonport, Eng., 7 June, 1889. Died of wounds, 30 July, 1916.

<sup>66</sup> Lieut. B. A. Bell, 28th Bn. Civil servant; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Perth, 1894. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

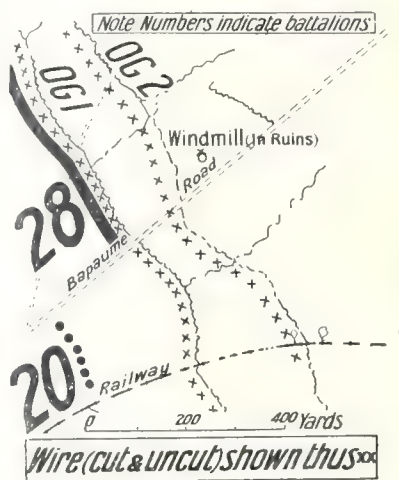


for eight minutes when a machine-gun opening upon them caused the men in some parts of the foremost waves to fling themselves on the ground. Fortunately, although a certain number of men were hit, the fire was mostly high, and the advance was resumed, but in a less regular manner, the lines being split into groups partly by the broken surface of the crater-field and partly by the enemy's fire. Officers and N.C.O's leading a trench attack in the dark were always under an acute strain from fear of missing their direction, and at this stage their feelings were those of nightmare, each group being uncertain of the action of the others and uncertain also of its own position. Moreover, owing to the shape of its objective the 7th Brigade had to expand its front slightly fanwise as it advanced, with the result—almost inevitable in a night attack—that the advancing lines parted. The 26th Battalion on the left swerved to follow the flank of the 6th Brigade, while most of the 25th veered to the right in answer to shouts of "Keep touch!" from the 28th. A gap consequently occurred in the 25th which, despite the efforts of the nearest officers, remained unbridged. The separate groups, however, all headed in the direction of the enemy line, either alone or in conformity with some movement discerned to right or left.

The effort to approach the O.G. Lines prior to the opening of the barrage had thus been dislocated and partly checked by the enemy's machine-guns. The short intense barrage, when it fell, suppressed this fire except from one machine-gun in O.G.2, which continued to play throughout that tornado. The Australian waves hurried forward. In the centre, by the light of the barrage, a few Germans from some sort of advanced post could be seen running back towards their trenches; and immediately afterwards on the right near the main road the Western Australians found their way barred by a belt of uncut wire entanglement. For several minutes, under the light of flares, now rising thickly, and under a rapidly increasing fire of rifles and machine-guns, they tried to force a way through—some beating at the wire with their rifle-butts, others attempting to open a path with wire cutters. Others, again, could be

seen tearing at the posts with their hands in the endeavour to wrench them from the ground. To the din of the British barrage there was now added that of the German, which fell quickly upon No-Man's Land. "The smell of powder, and din of guns and bombs," writes a survivor,<sup>67</sup> "nearly turned my head." Amid this delirium Captain Macrae,<sup>68</sup> commander of one company of the 28th, was killed while endeavouring to struggle through the wire. Captain Gibbings<sup>69</sup> was seen to be caught in it, and Lance-Corporal Bruce-Drayton,<sup>70</sup> who tried to free him, found that he was

dead. A third company leader, Lieutenant B. A. Bell (who had taken Major Welch's place) was last seen near the entanglement; the fourth, Captain Isaac,<sup>71</sup> who reached it and received a wound causing the loss of his arm, was the only company commander of the 28th to survive. A few men of the battalion, who happened to strike a point where the belt was damaged, got through and searched for the enemy trenches, of which they could there find no trace.<sup>72</sup> But those held up by the wire fell back, after a few minutes of hopeless effort, into shell-holes close in front of it. The second and third waves, as they came up, met the same obstacle. The last wave, on its arrival, found the earlier waves lying in front of the entanglement, seemingly waiting to make a rush, and it lay down also; it was not until



<sup>67</sup> Captain W. G. Boys, 25th Battalion.

<sup>68</sup> Capt. N. F. Macrae, 28th Bn. Farmer; of Katanning, W. Aust.; b. Henzada, Burma, 21 April, 1877. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

<sup>69</sup> Capt. C. T. Gibbings, 28th Bn. Postal official; of Geraldton, W. Aust.; b. Broadstairs, Kent, Eng., 12 Aug., 1883. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

<sup>70</sup> Cpl. G. A. Bruce-Drayton (No. 1679, 28th Bn.). Porter; of Bunbury, W. Aust.; b. Coolgardie, W. Aust., 1896.

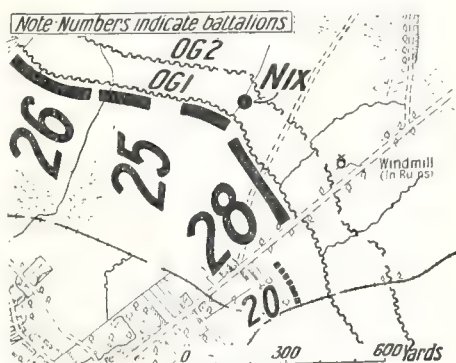
<sup>71</sup> Capt. A. S. Isaac, 28th Bn. Land and estate financier; of Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.; b. Fullarton, S. Aust., 19 Feb., 1885.

<sup>72</sup> Lieutenant L. C. Glover (of Perth, W. Aust.) appears to have found such a gap. He was directing the wounded to take cover in shell-holes when he was killed.

some time had passed that the last-comers realised that many of the comrades in what they mistook for a waiting line were dead.<sup>73</sup>

North of the 28th Captain Boys's<sup>74</sup> company of the 25th and certain other parts of that battalion and of the 26th were also faced by insufficiently damaged wire. But about half the 25th and parts of the 26th came upon sectors where the entanglement was almost entirely blown away, and after crossing its shreds and entering O.G.1, they found it nearly empty of the enemy, who had probably seen the advance and fled back to O.G.2. So far collapsed were parts of the trench that many of Captain Nix's company were in doubt as to whether they had yet reached it. Nix (in civil

life a young reporter on a Townsville newspaper), after convincing himself that he was in the first objective, moved on, according to orders, with part of his company to lie up near O.G.2 and attack it when the barrage again lifted. Elsewhere—but invisible to each other or seen only in the flashes of the shells—fragments



of other companies were advancing for the same purpose. But when the barrage was lifted and they endeavoured to rush the second trench, the troops were faced by a crowded enemy who apparently had run back from the first trench and, since the second contained no deep dugouts, were sheltering under the parapet ready for instant resistance. Parts of the 25th appear to have been faced here too with insufficiently cut wire. The men with Nix, attempting to rush O.G.2, were met by machine-gun fire at thirty yards. Nix himself fired with his revolver at a German who was mounting a machine-gun on the parapet in front of him, but was

<sup>73</sup> A somewhat similar occurrence was recorded at Lone Pine (see Vol. II, pp. 504-5).

<sup>74</sup> Capt. W. G. Boys, 25th Bn. Master draper; of Maryborough, Q'land; b. Brisbane, 7 April, 1890. Died of wounds, 5 Aug., 1916.

immediately hit through the hand by the gun's fire. His attempt failed with heavy loss. As a matter of fact, no party succeeded in occupying part of O.G.2, although a few men probably entered it. Some of Nix's company sought shelter in a shallow communication trench between O.G.1 and 2; their leader, and most of the survivors, fell back upon O.G.1.

Considerable lengths of O.G.1 had thus been seized; but the plight of the 7th Brigade was desperate. While its fragments were thus checked within the rim of the basin, the Germans from all parts of its arc poured upon them a deadly fire of rifles and machine-guns.

German records make it clear that the front attacked by the Australians this night was held by parts of three battalions. Since the disastrous events of July 25, the 162nd I.R.—one of the regiments of the 81st Brigade, whose staff had been borrowed to control that day's counter-attack—had been placed in the line, relieving the 86th R.I.R. The I/162nd, lent to the 117th Division, held the front formerly garrisoned by the 157th Regiment north-west and north of Pozières; the II/162nd had relieved the 86th R.I.R. in the O.G. Lines (the German "Braune-Stellung") as far south as the Courcellette-Pozières road; and the III/84th R.I.R. held from that point southwards to the Australian barricade in the O.G. Lines. The Germans had been well warned of the attack, first by the severe artillery-fire during the day, later by the report of strong concentrations of Australians in Pozières, and, finally, by the detection of the 5th Brigade deploying. As soon as the German infantry threw up its red flares, the expectant artillery of the 18th Reserve, 117th, 26th Reserve, and 52nd Divisions laid down their well-directed barrage; and, when the 7th Brigade advanced—according to the German historian, "ten lines deep"—against their semicircular system, the garrison, eager and excited with the rare opportunity thus offered, bowled the Australians over with fire from the flanks.<sup>75</sup>

The hail of bullets was such as had not been experienced in the A.I.F. since the fighting of 8th May, 1915, at Cape Helles and that of August 7th at The Nek at Anzac, but very brave efforts were made by the 25th and 26th Battalions—as by the 28th—to persist in the face of it. Lieutenants J. L. Smith<sup>76</sup> and Warry<sup>77</sup> of the 25th, while directing their men to sections where the entanglement was sufficiently broken, were killed. Lieutenant O'Hea<sup>78</sup> lay killed across the wire

<sup>75</sup> An officer of the 84th afterwards described the effect by rolling one forefinger over and over.

<sup>76</sup> Lieut. J. L. Smith, M.C.; 25th Bn. Stone cutter; of Ayr, Q'land; b. Aberdeen, Scotland, Nov., 1884. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

<sup>77</sup> Lieut. V. T. S. Warry, 25th Bn. Clerk; of Maryborough, Q'land; b. Maryborough, 15 July, 1895. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

<sup>78</sup> Lieut. R. S. O'Hea, 25th Bn. Business manager; of Kempsey, N.S.W., and Brisbane; b. Sydney, 3 April, 1882. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.



of O.G.1; Captain Donisch<sup>79</sup> lay wounded in it. A tall Irish ex-regular of the 25th, "Pat" O'Gorman,<sup>80</sup> tired of lying idle before it, called to his mates: "Come on, chaps! let's have a charge!", and, dashing up to the entanglement, was shot dead. Captain Hewitt<sup>81</sup> of the 26th, whose company had been held up by the wire, ordered his men to hold on while he went back and endeavoured to arrange for the renewal of the bombardment; but he was presently killed, as was one of his subalterns, Lieutenant Lindus.<sup>82</sup> Some of the enemy's machine-guns had held out from the first<sup>83</sup> in O.G.1, and others were placed there as the Germans reoccupied parts of their abandoned line. These were turned upon the troops lying in front of the wire; and, the position thus becoming hopeless, Captain Boys of the 25th, and probably other officers, reluctantly gave the order to retire. The troops in O.G.1 also fell back or were withdrawn. In the sector occupied by Captain Nix were two deep dugouts; a dead German lay at the mouth of each, and they were possibly empty, but their protection was useless. Nix had now only eight men, and German flares were rising from sectors of O.G.1 both to right and left of him, proving that these were occupied by the enemy garrison. About 12.50, therefore, he gave his last men the order to fall back.<sup>84</sup> On the northern flank of the brigade an order to withdraw, probably given by an officer to some section held up by the wire, ran at an early stage from right to left along the line. Apparently few officers<sup>85</sup> had been left in action to question it, and, though attempts were made to check the movement, part of the 25th and most of the 26th fell rapidly back across No-Man's Land. On the left of

<sup>79</sup> Capt. W. F. Donisch, 25th Bn. School teacher; of Dalby, Q'land; b. 11 Nov., 1883. Killed in action, 14 Nov., 1916.

<sup>80</sup> Pte. C. O'Gorman (No. 470; 25th Bn.). Labourer; of Waverley, N.S.W., and Brisbane; b. Limerick, Ireland, 1881. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

<sup>81</sup> Capt. T. C. Hewitt, 26th Bn. Science master; of Toowoomba, Q'land; b. Springvale, Wingen, N.S.W., 31 March, 1881. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

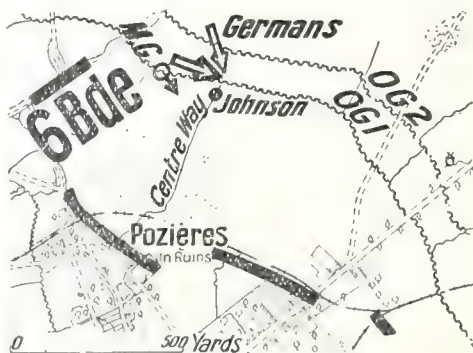
<sup>82</sup> Lieut. L. T. Lindus, 26th Bn. Accountant; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Launceston, 3 April, 1887. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

<sup>83</sup> Lieutenant P. G. Neeson (of Wollongong, N.S.W.) of the 26th was wounded while trying to suppress one.

<sup>84</sup> Nix afterwards could find only four of the party of about fifty which he had led against O.G.2. Five others of the party were captured by the enemy.

<sup>85</sup> In the 25th Lieutenants T. J. Carey, J. T. Hockin, V. T. S. Warry, J. L. Smith, J. M. Brown, L. W. Teitzel, A. McIntyre, and R. S. O'Hea had been killed—eleven of the sixteen officers of that battalion who were engaged were hit. (Carey belonged to Rockhampton, Q'land; Hockin to Brisbane and Singapore; Warry to Maryborough, Q'land; Smith to Ayr; Brown to Brisbane and Warwick; Teitzel to Warwick; McIntyre to Bundaberg; O'Hea to Kempsey, N.S.W., and Brisbane.)

the 25th, however, Captain Johnson,<sup>86</sup> part of whose company had previously penetrated nearly to O.G.2, and Lieutenant Taylor<sup>87</sup> of the 26th rallied a few men near the head of the long communication trench (afterwards part of Centre Way) which connected the O.G. Lines with the north of Pozières. The head of this trench, near its junction with O.G.1, had been completely broken down by artillery-fire, and farther back it was fringed by a number of large shallow dugouts, over the entrance of one of which, bridging the trench, stood the old bell of Pozières church, possibly placed there by the Germans for use in alarms. In these dugouts a number of wounded and some unwounded men had congregated. The broken end of the trench afforded a convenient barrier, and from behind it Johnson's party made another attempt to enter O.G.1. But the enemy had a machine-gun close at hand in that trench, and was bombing down it and also along a communication trench from O.G.2. The first two Australians who attempted to cross the barrier were hit, and Johnson therefore decided to hold where he was and ask for orders. By means of a pocket torch he succeeded in flashing



a message to 26th Battalion Headquarters. It was not understood, and therefore a signaller (C. F. Rutsch<sup>88</sup>) carried a verbal message to headquarters. "If you signal 'O.K.,' he said, "they'll come back. If you send 'H.O.' they'll hold on." The position being then untenable, Lieutenant-Colonel Ferguson<sup>89</sup> about 3 a.m. signalled for their return, which

<sup>86</sup> Capt. C. M. Johnson, 25th Bn. Insurance clerk; of Townsville, Q'land; b. Homestead, Q'land, 25 May, 1892. Killed in action, 15 Nov., 1916.

<sup>87</sup> Lieut. R. F. W. Taylor, 26th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Brisbane; b. Toowoomba, Q'land, 19 June, 1891.

<sup>88</sup> Pte. C. F. Rutsch (977; 25th Bn.). Labourer; of Didillibah, Q'land; b. Leyburn, Q'land, 16 Nov., 1886.

<sup>89</sup> Colonel G. A. Ferguson, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 26th Bn., 1915/16. Director, State Children Department, Q'land; of Nundah, Q'land; b. Brisbane, 18 June, 1872.

was safely effected. About this time also the survivors of the 28th had been withdrawn from in front of the enemy's wire.<sup>90</sup>

But, while the attack of the 5th and 7th Brigades had totally failed, that of the 6th had succeeded. Marching in during a quiet interval shortly after nightfall, the 23rd Battalion, detailed for the assault, had followed the edge of "K" Sap to the point where the railway crossed it, and then, turning to the right, had lined out on the railway as its jumping-off line. The enemy flares rising from beyond the Courcelette road, a quarter of a mile away, were too distant to involve serious danger of detection. The battalion attacked

with three companies, Major Brind's<sup>91</sup> on the left, Captain Maberly Smith's<sup>92</sup> in the centre, and Captain Kennedy's on the right. When the advance began, the detection of the waves of the other brigades brought some fire upon those of the 6th, but the first objective, Tom's Cut (Ganter Weg), was reached and passed without difficulty. The final objective—the Ovillers-Courcelette road—lay 200 yards farther on. It was not



being bombarded, the barrage lying on Park Lane (the German Gierich Weg), a strong trench 200 yards beyond; but it was defended—although the 23rd were unaware of this—only by a line of newly-dug posts (the Neuer Ganter Weg) beyond its northern edge. The garrison of one post appears to have been caught, but the rest fled before the approach of the Victorians, whose first two waves crossed

<sup>90</sup> A message from Lieutenant B. Angwin (of East Fremantle, W. Aust.) had reached Major Leane informing him of the situation. Leane then ordered the withdrawal, Corporal P. Blythe (of Bunbury, W. Aust.) moving along part of the front informing troops of the order. Some of the more badly wounded men had first been placed as far as possible under cover in shell-craters.

<sup>91</sup> Maj. E. T. Brind, 23rd Bn. Distiller; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 21 March, 1884. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

<sup>92</sup> Maj. R. F. Maberly Smith, M.C.; 23rd Bn. Merchant; of Sandringham, Vic.; b. Geelong, Vic., 19 April, 1882.



the track and the outpost positions without recognising either, and continued on towards Park Lane, on which the barrage of the British artillery was falling. This trench was strongly held, but the leading waves of Victorians were within a few yards of it under withering fire—and a few men on the right and left are said to have actually penetrated it<sup>93</sup> before the error was discovered. The troops were also in the fringe of their own barrage, and the loss was severe. A remnant of these waves came back, but Major Brind, Captain Kennedy, Lieutenant R. G. Raws,<sup>94</sup> and a large number of others were missing. The majority of these had been killed and were never heard of again. The total loss of the 23rd was 7 officers<sup>95</sup>—5 of them killed—and 326 of other ranks.

Meanwhile the third and fourth waves (the fourth carried picks and shovels) had been stopped at the Owillers-Courcelette road, their proper objective, and, under Captain Maberly Smith, were digging a trench along its southern side. Here the survivors of the first two waves joined them. Such was the position when it was found that the 26th, which had been attacking the O.G. Lines in the right rear of the 23rd, was falling back. The order to retire which caused this withdrawal had also been passed to the 23rd, but Lieutenant Pearce<sup>96</sup> of the right company, and Maberly Smith of the centre, stopped the retirement and sent a report to their battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Fethers.<sup>97</sup> Fethers, receiving similar reports at 2.30 and 3 a.m. from the commanders of the 25th and 26th, ordered a company of the 22nd, his nearest reserve, to advance towards the junction of O.G.I and the Courcelette road in order to secure the flank. This company, commanded

<sup>93</sup> On the right some entered O.G.I. On the left, near "K" Trench—according to the reports of those who later returned—they killed about fifty of the enemy.

<sup>94</sup> Lieut. R. G. Raws, 23rd Bn. Warehouseman; of Adelaide; b. Manchester, Eng., 26 May, 1886. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

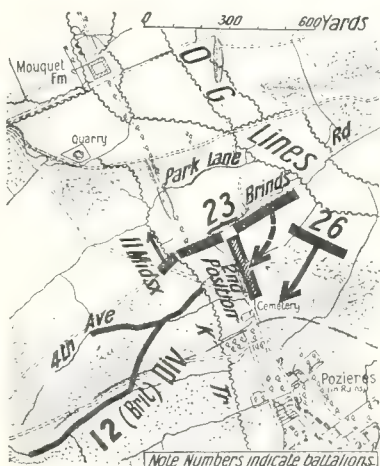
<sup>95</sup> Weeks later, however, it was learnt that Captain Kennedy had been captured, severely wounded, and had died in a German hospital. Lieutenants N. Macdonald and I. R. Flett were killed and Captain H. M. Conran and Lieutenant G. L. Hinchcliffe wounded. (Kennedy belonged to Dandenong, Vic.; Macdonald to Ballarat; Flett to Brighton; Conran to Broken Hill, N.S.W.; and Hinchcliffe to Kew, Vic.).

<sup>96</sup> Lieut. P. W. Pearce, M.C.; 23rd Bn. Of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Hawthorn, 10 June, 1891. [Lieut. G. E. Blight (of Melbourne) of the same battalion also took a leading part in this work.]

<sup>97</sup> Lieut.-Col. W. K. Fethers, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 23rd Bn., 1916. Insurance clerk; of Melbourne; b. Malvern, Vic., 26 Nov., 1885.



by a most determined young Australian, Major Mackay,<sup>98</sup> reached the flank and began digging close to the wire of O.G.I. When it was ascertained that there was no possibility of the 7th Brigade retrieving that position, a further order was sent both to this company and to the right flank of the 23rd to fall back, leaving only the left company of the 23rd on the Courcelette road. The withdrawing troops, however, were instructed to connect this company's position securely with the Pozières trenches by digging in along a road which ran at right angles from it back to the village. The morning being misty, the work continued without serious interruption until 9 o'clock, by which time the trenches both along the Ovillers-Courcelette track (henceforth known as "Brind's Road") and that to Pozières<sup>99</sup> had been well dug, and the reserves withdrawn in order to avoid overcrowding. The enemy reoccupied part of his old position on Brind's Road (Neuer Ganter Weg) with the apparent intention of attacking with bombs the portion gained by the 23rd; but a Stokes mortar, firing from "K" Sap, kept him at a distance.



The 6th Brigade's attack fell on the left of the I/162nd holding Brind's Road (Neuer Ganter Weg). The German official account states that the artillery bombardment thrown upon this sector had been particularly severe; as it was known to be the weakest, the company holding it had been reinforced by part of another. The attack passed over the first German line so easily and swiftly<sup>100</sup> that German narratives not unnaturally assume Park Lane (Gierich Weg) to have been

<sup>98</sup> Maj. M. N. Mackay, 22nd Bn. Barrister; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Bendigo, 8 Feb., 1891. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

<sup>99</sup> Called "Beith's Road" after Capt. D. Beith (of Ballarat, Vic.) of the 23rd. Three other roads on this flank were named after Kennedy, Raws, and Smith.

<sup>100</sup> The German official historian states that the Australians "inflamed with alcohol," poured through a gap made in the German line and, utterly ignoring the fire of the defence, surrounded in a few moments the western flank of the defending company. The evidence for this allegation that the 23rd Battalion had been primed for the attack with rum is not mentioned, nor is any such statement made in the report of the German intelligence staff upon the examination of the prisoners. Careful enquiries among the survivors of the 23rd show it to be entirely false. No "issue" of rum was made before this attack. Moreover, every man who served in the Australian infantry knows

the objective of this part of the attack, and claim that it was repelled. Strong reinforcements happened to be nearing the Gierich Weg at the time of the attack. They consisted of two companies of the III/86th R.I.R. (the battalion that had been broken by shell-fire when moving up on July 25 on the Bapaume road—since which date it had been in reserve). It was to have relieved the I/162nd on the previous night, but the relief had been postponed for twenty-four hours. About midnight on July 28 its 10th and 12th companies entered the trenches near Mouquet Farm on their way to the front. They observed that the battlefield was "uncannily quiet." A "wild artillery-fire" suddenly broke out, obviously heralding an attack on a large scale. Through this fire the companies forced their way forward in spite of casualties, arriving at the German support line (Park Lane) just as the overrunning Australians approached it.<sup>101</sup> In order to avoid the chance of confusion the officer leading the 86th told the 162nd that he had been sent to reinforce, not to relieve. His troops appear to have arrived just in time. There was a shout of "Tommy comes!" and, as the relieving troops reached the trench, out of the reek and smoke of the shell-fire came the Australians, in what the historian of the 86th R.I.R. describes as "dense columns," causing the impression that they were troops strange to the front. They were quickly shot down,<sup>102</sup> and the historian adds that no part of Park Lane was entered. The outpost-line along Brind's Road, however, was temporarily lost, its occupants running back to Park Lane, and taking with them some prisoners. Most of it was reoccupied next day. In the 1st company of the 162nd Regiment, which had been driven from that line, an officer and ten men had been killed; but the total casualties of the I/162nd both in the first and second line were not numerous, only 2 officers and 49 men being hit. The 12th company of the 86th on the other hand lost heavily.

The German intelligence officers who examined the Australian prisoners (of whom there were about sixty belonging to the 6th and 7th Brigades) were highly impressed with the bearing of a few old Gallipoli hands among them—but not with that of the majority. These, it was noted, were almost all young reinforcements, with little training. Some of them said they were tired of the war and glad to be made prisoners. It is fair to add that, according to German accounts, about half were "more or less" wounded, and all had emerged from a terrible operation which they knew to have been mismanaged. Many had run into their own barrage as well as the enemy's; and those on

that, while the Australians by no means abstained from strong liquor when out of the line, their settled practice—thoroughly approved by almost all officers and men—was to avoid any "issue" of liquor immediately before an attack. Experience proved that if rum was to be "issued" at all in connection with an attack, the proper time was afterwards, when the trenches had been seized and the men were becoming tired. Even this was avoided by the 6th Brigade in General Gellibrand's time, although the effect of the rum "issue" in sustaining men so exhausted was beyond question. There were occasions on which an exception was made to these general rules, but—so far as the 6th Brigade was concerned—this occasion was not one of them, and the impetuous advance must be differently explained. As a matter of fact, the resistance of the I/162nd holding Brind's Road is much exaggerated in the German history; most of its defenders fled, and the advancing companies were in the main not even aware that a line of defence existed there!

<sup>101</sup> A vivid description of this advance is given in the history of the 86th R.I.R.

<sup>102</sup> The same narrative (*p.* 143) contains a vivid account of the manner in which they were shot down in front of the trench; but since a similar account is given (*p.* 146) of an imaginary attack at 2 p.m. next day, its details may not be accurate.





to the Australian post behind O.G.2. There they turned the tables on the enemy, and regained the junction of Munster Alley and O.G.2<sup>107</sup> "The 17th Australian Battalion," says an official account, "gave great assistance in maintaining the supply of bombs." On their part, Australians of the 17th Battalion were so impressed with the pluck of the British in this sharp fight that a deputation of their officers next morning went over to the headquarters of that battalion to express their admiration. "The Australian," remarks the historian of the 23rd Division,<sup>108</sup> "is not prone to empty compliments, and the congratulations of men on the spot were perhaps more deeply felt than those even of high commanders."

As so often before, however, the net result of that night's fierce bomb-fighting was that the front remained practically unaltered. The only gain on the III Corps front was slightly farther east, where, patrolling up untenanted saps, the British had established an outpost within bomb-throw of the Switch Trench and affording a view actually over the reverse side of the ridge, towards Martinpuich.

The first effort to gain the O.G. Lines and crest east of Pozières—and the first important offensive undertaken by the 2nd Australian Division—had thus almost totally failed. The general situation was hardly affected by the small gain on the left, where the 6th Brigade had established what the midday report of the 18th (German) Reserve Division described as a small nest at the junction of the 86th R.I.R. and 162nd I.R. sectors. The delay engendered by the failure was probably—in spite of the army commander's desire for haste—of no importance: the British offensive had been relaxed; no offensive on a wide front was immediately contemplated, and therefore the success of a single division, however striking, could have effected little. A more serious result was the loss suffered by the 2nd Division, which was given as 2,002, over and above 1,500 incurred in holding the front during the two previous days. The military effect of these losses lay not so much in their numbers, which were not great compared with those incurred

<sup>107</sup> The following night the 10th West Riding Regiment again attacked and secured about 100 yards of the alley.

<sup>108</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel H. R. Sandilands, *The Twenty Third Division, 1914-1919*, p. 87.



in other battles, as in the knowledge—which the troops shared—that they were due to avoidable mistakes. Of these, the failure to cut certain sections of the wire was not the chief, despite the disaster thus caused to the 28th and parts of its sister battalions. It is hardly conceivable that, even had the wire been thoroughly cut, the attack, detected as it had been by the enemy, could have succeeded. The real cause of defeat was that, through an insufficient allowance of time for thorough preparation, the troops were forced to assemble in the open, and then, without the protection of artillery-fire, to advance 400 or 500 yards against an enemy constantly expecting to be attacked. Through this weakness in the plan, part of the line was detected and fired on even during the assembly; almost the whole of it came under fire during the preliminary advance; and the subsequent barrages were insufficient to suppress the enemy fortified by this ample warning. In the experience of the A.I.F., striking success seldom, if ever, came without at least some element of surprise: and in this battle there was none. The attack of the 5th Brigade was defeated before it was launched. Uncut wire caused the sacrifice of the 28th, which lost over 470, 8 of its officers being killed and 3 (including Colonel Collett<sup>109</sup>) wounded;<sup>110</sup> but it was only contributory to the defeat of the 25th, which lost 343, including 11 officers (of whom 8 were killed), and to that of the 26th, which lost 297, including 6 officers.<sup>111</sup>

This failure drew upon the Anzac Corps staff an informal but emphatic reprimand from Haig, who thought it due to over-confidence engendered by success in Gallipoli. "You are not fighting Bashi-Bazouks now," he said to Birdwood and White in their office at Contay. "This is serious, scientific war, and you are up against the most scientific and most military nation in Europe." Pointing to a map on the

<sup>109</sup> Col. H. B. Collett, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 28th Bn., 1915/18. Public servant; of Mount Lawley, W. Aust.; b. Guernsey, Channel Islands, 12 Nov., 1877.

<sup>110</sup> Besides those already named, Lieutenants A. Levetus and P. T. C. Bell were killed and Lieutenants W. T. Dawson and M. G. Hammond wounded. (Levetus belonged to Perth, W. Aust.; Bell to Bayswater; Dawson to Collie; Hammond to Perth and Broome.)

<sup>111</sup> Besides those whose loss has already been mentioned, the following officers were killed or wounded—in the 25th, Captain Johnson; in the 26th, Captain J. E. Herbert and Lieutenants O. B. Paterson and J. M. Kennedy. (Johnson belonged to Townsville, Q'land; Herbert to Nerang; Paterson to Bundaberg; and Kennedy to Geelong, Vic.)

wall, he explained a number of supposed omissions in artillery and other arrangements—which he attributed to over-confidence on the part of Legge—and said he would have no such rough and ready methods in France. But as a matter of fact, although important errors had been made, they were not of the crude nature indicated by Haig, whose information was almost wholly inaccurate; and, at the end of the interview, White, despite a warning head-shake from the chief of Haig's staff, faced the Commander-in-Chief and pointed this out in detail, item by item. After hearing him through, Haig laid a hand on White's shoulder. "I dare say you're right, young man," he said kindly.

Steps had already been taken towards a renewal of the attack. No sooner had the full news of the reverse reached Corps Headquarters than a conference was held, at 10 o'clock on July 29th, between Birdwood and Legge and the chiefs of their staffs, General White and Colonel Bridges. Legge's pride, and that of his division, rightly prompted him to urge that his division, though its losses were already over 3,500, should undertake the renewed attempt. No one who had taken part in such a struggle could look forward without some dread to entering it again; but the division was far from incapacitated by its losses,<sup>112</sup> and most of its officers and men, if given the responsibility of tendering their advice, would have answered: "Give it another go—it is no use leaving off with a set-back!" The 7th Brigade had lost rather heavily, but in the next attack it was set to capture only part of the O.G. Lines, the northern sector of them being on this occasion allotted to a battalion of the 6th Brigade. Legge was more concerned for the 5th Brigade, which had not only been in the line four days subject to continuous bombardment from the enemy—and, in the case of the 18th Battalion, from its own artillery<sup>113</sup>—but was worn down by two unsuccessful assaults of the O.G. Lines south of the Bapaume road, by constant bomb-fighting in Munster Alley, by the endless carrying of grenades and water, and by digging of trenches. Hesitating to increase this obvious overstrain, Legge at

<sup>112</sup> On July 31, while pointing out that the 5th Brigade was feeling the strain, Legge wrote to Birdwood that the strength of his infantry was still 10,000 and that there was therefore no difficulty as to numbers.

<sup>113</sup> See p. 662.

one time proposed to Holmes to relieve part of his brigade by obtaining two battalions of the now approaching 4th Division. Holmes refused them.

I understand from you (he wrote) that you are going to take the position with the 2nd Division. That being so, it is my desire, and, I am sure, the wish of all, that the whole of the battalions of my brigade should remain and play the part allotted to them.

The conference on the morning of July 29th resulted—as hasty consultations immediately after a reverse often did—in an order that the operation should be repeated almost at once—on the night of July 30th. The two neighbouring corps of the Fourth Army would be attacking that evening, and possibly the Anzac leaders hoped that their own preparations would be complete in time to allow the 2nd Division to enjoy this advantage. The chief alteration in the preliminary arrangements for the new attack was that the “jumping-off” position 250 yards from the enemy’s lines, and the tracks by which the troops were to reach it, were to be well marked with tape; the “jumping-off” line was to be held “by posts or other means”; communication trenches to it were to be at once begun; and the bombardment was to be more thorough.<sup>114</sup>

While these decisions were being arrived at, the 7th Brigade was collecting its depleted battalions in Sausage Gully; but many of the wounded still lay out near the wire of the O.G. Lines in shell-holes under the now unclouded sun and the gradually returning bombardment. Most of the unwounded men had made their way back; after dawn, the battlefield being, for the first time since the arrival of the Australians, shrouded by mist, and the artillery having eased, the stretcher-bearers had been able to work fairly close to the German lines. The Germans themselves at dawn patrolled the crater-field in front of their trenches, and in several instances attended to the wounds of Australians lying there;<sup>115</sup> Captain Boys, who, having waited to clear his men, was still

<sup>114</sup> At this stage an attack on the section of the O.G. Lines south of the Bapaume road, with bombs only, was contemplated; but it was subsequently decided to extend the frontal attack as far south as the old railway and seize the rest by bombing.

<sup>115</sup> Some of the German records refer to the horror of the scenes in front of the lines.

out there, was visited by them, but was mistaken for dead.<sup>116</sup> A German gave Private Collins<sup>117</sup> of the 26th a drink of spirits and tried to carry him to O.G.I. Sergeant Freestone<sup>118</sup> of the 25th was first visited by a medical officer or orderly, who bandaged him, and afterwards by a patrolling private, who took away his rations and threatened to give him a bomb for his breakfast. German stretcher-bearers came out and carried some of the wounded into their lines, and, as the light increased, the Australian infantry, observing these attentions, naturally refrained from firing on the enemy so engaged, while the Germans for a time allowed the Australian bearers to work without interference. Nevertheless many wounded had been left west of O.G.I and some even east of it. A few of these came back the next night, and odd men even three nights later.<sup>119</sup> The remainder either died or were made prisoners.

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<sup>116</sup> Captain Boys got back to the Australian line that night, bringing a valuable report as to the nature of the enemy's wire and the effect of the renewed bombardment upon it.

<sup>117</sup> Pte. H. J. Collins (No. 2114; 26th Bn.). Miner; of South Brisbane; b. Glasgow, Scotland, 1879. Killed in action, 29 July, 1916.

<sup>118</sup> Sgt. C. G. Freestone (No. 637; 25th Bn.). Clerk; of Goondiwindi, Q'land; b. Cambooya, Q'land, 1877.

<sup>119</sup> On the night of July 30 Captain Donisch was brought in from the German wire by a stretcher-bearer of the 23rd Battalion who, it was said, had already carried in 46 men. [It is elsewhere recorded that Private Charles Toovey (of Sydney; subsequently a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers), of the 23rd Battalion, remained on duty until the last of the wounded were collected. Private J. McLeod (of Fremantle, W. Aust.) of the 28th Battalion came in on the third night after that of the battle. Sergeant L. W. Marshall (of Fremantle, W. Aust.) of the 28th was captured when wounded, and was being carried to the rear by German stretcher-bearers, when he fainted. On coming to, he found himself alone, still on the stretcher, in an old abandoned sap. Crawling away he endeavoured to get through the German front line to the British line, but invariably found Germans in the trenches in front of him. Two days later, while thus creeping along a sap, he was seen by some of the enemy and recaptured.]



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE TAKING AND HOLDING OF THE POZIÈRES HEIGHTS

THE position on the Pozières heights on July 29th was still practically as the 1st Australian Division had left it—the Germans on the crest in the O.G. Lines and Brind's Road,<sup>1</sup> and the 2nd Australian Division on the plateau before them, close in front of Pozières village, faced with the task of preparing a new attack. The policy pursued by Sir Douglas Haig since July 23rd had brought a complete change over the nature of the struggle. The diarist of III Corps artillery for August 7th comments:

The fighting has now really returned to rather active trench warfare.

It had all the conditions of the minor offensives of trench warfare—small attacks, easily located by the enemy, never penetrating far enough to be clear of further lines of occupied trenches or to disorganise the enemy infantry or artillery, and consequently subject to instant counter-attacks and to concentrated bombardment from most of the surrounding batteries. Haig was now able to give his army commanders a fairly accurate notion as to how long this policy of local offensives would continue—that is to say, how much time must elapse before he had the necessary instruments and troops for the resumption of the wide offensive that he had throughout contemplated. That offensive, he informed them on August 3rd, would probably be undertaken about the last half of September. Till then, although the attack was to be continued in close co-operation with the French, its methods must be "suitable to the existing situation." As the enemy had brought up considerable reinforcements and could "continue for some time still to replace his tired troops,"<sup>2</sup> he must be "worn down" during the present phase. The British at the same time must

practise such economy of men and material as will ensure our having the "last reserves" at our disposal when the crisis of the fight is reached, which may—and probably will—not be sooner than the last half of September.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Except the small portion of this road captured by the 6th Brigade.

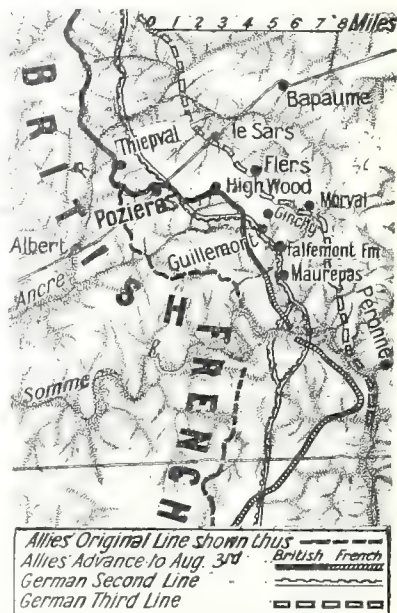
<sup>2</sup> Letter from Haig's Chief of the General Staff to Generals Rawlinson and Gough, 3 Aug., 1916.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Although the intervening phase might "be regarded as a 'wearing-out' battle,"<sup>4</sup> Haig decided that it should also have a tactical object—"to secure the whole of the Morval-Thiepval Ridge" as a basis for his great attack in September. To this end "the first necessity" was to gain ground on the right—to help forward the French by capturing Guillemont, Falfemont Farm, and Ginchy. "Due regard to economy" was enjoined even here; the attacks of the XIII Corps, which Haig looked upon as his main operation throughout this period of piece-meal fighting, were to be delivered on a front as wide as possible, but to be limited in their objectives.

In the centre the XV and III Corps—from Delville Wood to Munster Alley—were to make "no serious attack," but to prepare for a subsequent one, of which, however, the date was not yet forecast.

On the left the operations, though important, were regarded by Haig as purely secondary:—



For the present, operations west of Munster Alley will be restricted to careful and methodical progress designed to gain possession of Windmill Hill above Pozières, of the enemy's main second line trenches running thence north-westward to about Mouquet Farm, and of the enemy's trenches on the spur between Mouquet Farm and Ovillers-la-Boisselle. Each step in this progression must be thoroughly prepared, and no attack is to be made unless and until its success has been ensured so far as forethought and careful preparation can do so.

The army commanders were warned that all these operations must be carried out "with as little expenditure of *fresh troops*<sup>5</sup> and of munitions" as circumstances would permit, but that economy was to be sought by ensuring that the attacks would succeed—that is, by carefully selecting the objectives and always employing sufficient troops to capture and hold them.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Haig's Chief of the General Staff to Generals Rawlinson and Gough, 3 Aug., 1916.

<sup>5</sup> The italics are not in the original.

The Australians were, therefore, engaged in what the Commander-in-Chief intended to be merely secondary operations, designed partly to secure the Second Line Ridge, partly to wear down the enemy by tactics that Haig afterwards described as gaining ground "methodically, and without haste, trench by trench."

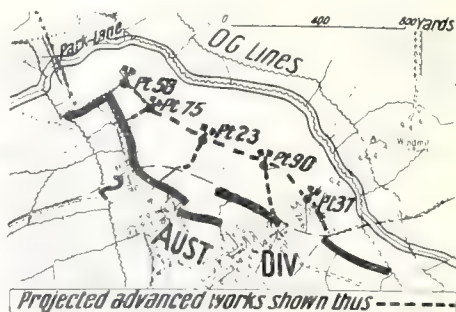
This aspect of their operations was naturally unknown to the actual participants in the Pozzières fighting; but, even had they possessed full knowledge, it is hard to see what meaning the term "methodical progress" could have conveyed to them other than that of a dreadful succession of trench operations renewed daily on a narrow front. Doubtless to the Commander-in-Chief, and possibly to Cabinet, the use of terms implying leisurely progress brought some comfortable assurance of economy of life as well as of munitions; but to the front line the method merely appeared to be that of applying a battering-ram ten or fifteen times against the same part of the enemy's battle-front with the intention of penetrating for a mile, or possibly two, into the midst of his organised defences. The troops of the Anzac Corps were already vaguely conscious of the consequences of this policy. They were to have them seared into their minds by the experiences of the next few weeks.

In the renewal of his difficult attempt the commander of the 2nd Division was not left without assistance. Immediately after the conference on July 29th,<sup>6</sup> General White, whose tactical ability lay largely in his always seeing an operation whole, wrote out for Legge a number of points of advice embodying a thorough preparation for the attack. Communication trenches were to be advanced; strong-points established at their heads; the strong-points linked together by a new front line; saps then pushed out farther, ending in T-heads, from which posts could guard the new line during assembly. Trench-mortars, field-batteries, and machine-guns should be moved forward and a thorough bombardment carried out. This time the whole operation would "be undertaken deliberately. The actual date will be determined by the progress of preparation."

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<sup>6</sup> See pp. 644-5.

Before the day was out it was obvious that such preparations could not be completed before Sunday night, and that the hope of attacking on the same evening as the Fourth Army was therefore vain. The Fourth Army's attacks were



launched in due course and were everywhere defeated, except between High Wood and Bazentin, where the 34th Division managed to seize and hold part of the "Intermediate Trench." It may here be added that no other operation of importance except three limited attacks<sup>7</sup> took place on the Somme during the operations of I Anzac Corps dealt with in this chapter.

On the postponement of the 2nd Division's attack, half the artillery of the 1st Division, exhausted by the constant firing of barrages night and day for nearly a fortnight, was at once relieved by putting in the remaining artillery of the 2nd Division, Brigadier-General Johnston, C.R.A. of that division, now relieving Brigadier-General Hobbs. The command of all the artillery in the corps had also changed, a British officer, Brigadier-General Napier,<sup>8</sup> having assumed it<sup>9</sup> on the day before the last attack. Napier, having been asked to look with especial care into the artillery arrangements, informed White on July 30th that the O.G. Lines were not yet sufficiently destroyed; that bombardment by heavy howitzers was advisable for the destruction of the wire and indispensable for the demolition of the trenches; that the bombardment would require 4,800 heavy shell, which, if so wished, could be fired in one day by nine batteries, each expending 540 rounds. The plan of barrages devised by

<sup>7</sup> See pp. 670, 676-7. Heavy fighting was of course in progress on other fronts—at Verdun, in Russia, and on the Isonzo.

<sup>8</sup> Maj.-Gen. W. J. Napier, C.B., C.M.G.; R.A. Commanded 7th Brigade, R.G.A., 1915/16; I Anzac Corps Artillery, 1916/17; Director of Artillery, War Office, 1917/20. Of Chelsea, London, Eng.; b. 10 Nov., 1863. Died 18 Nov., 1925.

<sup>9</sup> In succession to Brigadier-General C. Cunliffe Owen (also of the British Army), who had been the chief artillery officer of Birdwood's staff since before the Landing.



Napier for the actual attack was based on the supposition that this preparatory bombardment would first have been completed.

As this preparation could be completed in a day, the date for the attack depended upon how long it would take the infantry to dig the requisite 1,400 yards of "jumping-off trench" and the necessary approaches. Accordingly on July 30th Legge was informed that the bombardment would be spread out over the period required by him for this purpose. He had by that time made up his mind that the assembly and attack should not be undertaken in the dark hours; his brigadiers were also opposed to a night attack, hating, as did all men and officers, the bewildering confusion and uncertainty which invariably accompanied trench operations on a large scale carried out in the dark. All three brigadiers appear to have agreed that the troops should assemble towards the end of the day and attack while there was still light enough to see where they were going.<sup>10</sup> Legge consequently fixed the hour for the assault at 9.15 p.m.,<sup>11</sup> when there would still be ample light for discerning the objectives. But as this meant assembling the troops in daylight, they must be provided not only with a "jumping-off" trench in which to lie hidden, but also with a completely hidden route to it. To ensure punctuality they must also have separate communication trenches for the several brigades. Legge was of opinion that these works would be finished on August 2nd. The programme of bombardment was therefore provisionally<sup>12</sup> spread out over the intervening days.

The plans for the bombardment were cleverly drawn by Napier in conjunction with the artillery commanders of the Reserve Army and II Corps, and contributed an element of surprise in a campaign in which that most effective of all methods seems generally to have been striven after on a

<sup>10</sup> Holmes also urged that the explosion of heavy shells had a less frightening and confusing effect in daylight than at night.

<sup>11</sup> This was "summer time" under a daylight-saving regulation. The true time would be 8.15 p.m.

<sup>12</sup> In case the necessary works were not completed by August 2, White, who was determined that on this occasion there should be no undue haste, added: "The date and time . . . will be decided upon your reports as to the progress of preparations."

small scale, though unattained—or probably discarded as impossible of attainment—in the main offensive. The demolition of the O.G. Lines was to be carried out in four very heavy bombardments, each lasting an hour, by the heavy howitzers of the I Anzac and II Corps. The portion of these lines to be destroyed by each corps<sup>13</sup> was further divided into battery areas, a particular length of both trenches, O.G.1 and O.G.2, being allotted to each of the heavy batteries taking part. The III Corps would deal with the trenches south of the Bapaume road. The four bombardments were fixed for:

July 31 6-7 p.m.

Aug. 1 11.30 a.m.—12.30 p.m.

7.30-8.30 p.m.

Aug. 2 8-9 p.m.

The Anzac Corps heavy artillery included four siege batteries,<sup>14</sup> which were directed on the trenches, and four batteries of 60-pounder guns,<sup>15</sup> which were used mainly against the enemy's batteries. That of the II Corps included six siege batteries.<sup>16</sup> In each bombardment the following allotment of shells was to be fired:<sup>17</sup>

	II Corps (6 batteries)	I Anzac (4 batteries)	Total.
6" howitzer ..	550	250	800
8" howitzer ..	460	180	640
9.2" howitzer ..	200	200	400
			1,840

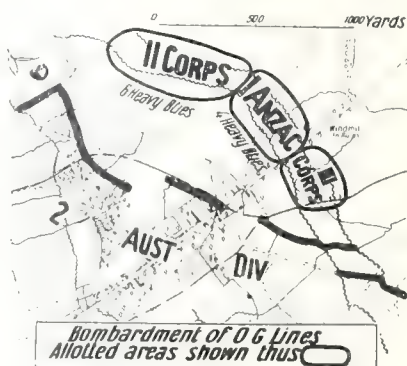
<sup>13</sup> The heavy artillery of II Corps, as before, dealt with the O.G. Lines north of The Elbow and that of I Anzac with the sector south of it.

<sup>14</sup> The 45th Heavy Artillery Group, consisting of the 36th, 54th (Australian), 55th (Australian), and 108th Siege Batteries.

<sup>15</sup> The 55th Heavy Artillery Group, consisting of the 132nd, 142nd, 146th, and 156th Siege Batteries.

<sup>16</sup> The 17th, 20th, 27th, 41st, 62nd, and 70th. The work of the 41st Siege Battery was taken over by the 56th on July 31.

<sup>17</sup> These orders were slightly varied, but the alterations are immaterial. The full allotment was usually fired by the 9.2- and 8-inch howitzers, but the 6-inch through certain defects fired less than half of theirs.



For the purposes of the field artillery also, the O.G. Lines were divided in a somewhat similar manner between the brigades and batteries, the Australian batteries dealing with most of the front and those of the neighbouring corps<sup>13</sup> with the flanks. These did not take part in the demolition bombardments of the siege artillery, but in a special series of hurricane barrages, each lasting from ten minutes to half-an-hour and designed to mystify and harass the enemy and to practise the field artillery for the actual attack. The programme of one of these bombardments, which imitated closely that behind which the assault would be launched, was as follows:

*Time.*

10 min. before "zero" For ten minutes all fire ceases.

"Zero" to + 5 min. .. Five minutes' intense fire by 18-pounders on O.G.1.

(During this fire, one minute after its commencement, all available heavy howitzers simultaneously fire one shell upon O.G.2. They repeat this two minutes later.)

+ 5 min. to + 8 min. 18-pounders lift their fire to O.G.2 and barrage it intensely for three minutes.

+ 8 min. to + 9 min. 18-pounder fire brought back to O.G.1 for one minute.

+ 9 min. to + 19 min. No fire.

+ 19 onwards .. The ordinary night-firing.

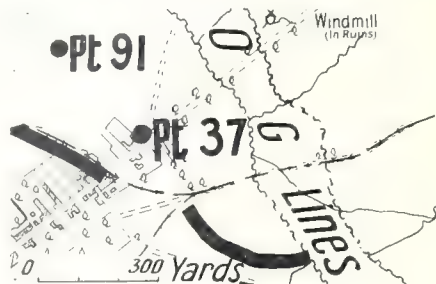
These "special bombardments" were ordered daily, each differing slightly from the others; the series up to August 2nd was as follows:

Night of July 29/30	..	..	10.15 p.m.
			2.55 a.m.
July 30	..	..	noon.
Night of July 30/31	..	..	10 p.m.
			2.30 a.m.
July 31	..	..	2 p.m.
Night of July 31/August 1	..	..	10.10 p.m.
			3 a.m.
Night of August 1/2	..	..	3.10 a.m.

The general order for the other vitally important item of preparation—the digging of the "jumping-off" trench and the whole system of avenues thereto—was issued by Legge on

<sup>13</sup> The artillery of the 25th and 34th British Divisions, detached from their proper divisions, were acting under the II and III Corps respectively, on the flanks of the I Anzac.

July 31st. Certain preliminaries had already been undertaken on the two preceding nights, the southernmost strong-point (known as "Point 37") having been established—again largely through the effort of Captain Kirke of the 18th Battalion—on the main road east of Pozières,<sup>19</sup> and the 2nd Pioneers having also begun a new communication trench which was afterwards continued, chiefly by the 4th Pioneers, through the centre of Pozières and became known as "Centre Way." But the main work did not commence until, late on the afternoon of July 31st, the divisional scheme reached



the engineer companies and pioneer and infantry battalions. It apportioned the task in the forward area between the three brigades, each of which was to send large parties to dig in No-Man's Land, under the direction of engineers, the "jumping-off" trenches for its own battalions and, in general, the communications thereto. The 7th Brigade was not holding any part of the front, but would send up its detachments from bivouac at Tara Hill. As a preliminary, early in the night, before the parties arrived, the engineers were to mark out the position of the "jumping-off" trench 200 yards from and parallel to the enemy's line.

These orders did not reach the 7th Brigade until 6 p.m., and the 7th Field Company, which was responsible for directing the work of that brigade and of the 5th, did not receive its instructions from the latter until 7 o'clock. The scheme was extensive: the "jumping-off" trench was to be marked out and dug three feet in depth in a single night by 250 men of the 6th Brigade and 325 of the 7th—each man digging two yards:

*6th Brigade.*

250 men to dig 500 yards.

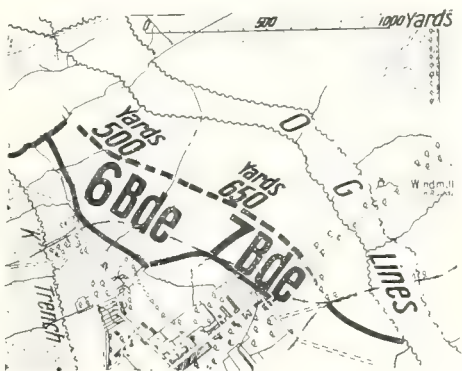
*7th Brigade.*

325 men to dig 650 yards.

<sup>19</sup> This was almost at the same point where the 5th Field Company under Major Henderson had attempted to dig one on July 25 (*see p. 568*).



Lewis gunners, lying farther out in No-Man's Land, were to cover the digging, and the diggers were to work as far as possible in the shelter of shell-holes; but General Paton, who could not forget how his troops, unprotected by artillery, had been caught in No-Man's Land on the night of July 28th, expressed a hope that the artillery-fire arranged for that night would be sufficiently intense to suppress the German machine-gunners. For digging communication trenches there were allotted other large parties, including 450 men of the 5th Brigade.



Late though the orders were, these detachments were sent forward about dusk to find their allotted positions, General Paton himself remaining at the front till 10 o'clock to assure himself that the parties from his brigade were duly arriving. The night passed, as far as headquarters was aware, without special incident. Next morning, however, the several commanders, expecting to receive reports of the completed work, were shocked by a message from the C.R.E.<sup>20</sup> of the 2nd Division stating that, in consequence of German shelling, no work had been done on the forward line. It was afterwards ascertained that this was incorrect, so far as it concerned the 6th Brigade, which, under difficulties presently to be described, had established an outpost on the "jumping-off" line and dug a trench to it; but the forward line of the 7th Brigade had not even been marked out. Legge's chief-of-staff wrote to Paton:

This trench to be dug to-night is most important, and I do not think your officers quite realised it last night. I would like you to put a senior officer in charge to-night to see the thing through. We may have to put up with some casualties, but all ranks should know

<sup>20</sup> Officer commanding engineers—Lieutenant-Colonel S. F. Newcombe, R.E. (the same who afterwards took part in the campaign in Arabia).

that the work is to save our men in the attack. . . . The 6th Brigade got half of their trench down last night and expect to finish it to-night. Will you give this your personal attention? . . . If the attack is to be made in daylight there must be lines in which troops can form up. . . .

It is probably true that the importance of the work was not understood by the battalions; it is certain that the staff of Corps and Army had not, then or afterwards, the faintest conception of the circumstances in which it had to be performed; nor were they fully realised at the headquarters of division or even of brigades. The difficulty to be met in one part of the preparation—the work of entrenching—was directly caused by the other part—the bombardment. The demolition bombardments, inflicting great suffering on the enemy and obviously heralding some offensive, and the surprise bombardments, conveying the impression that the attack was imminent, seldom failed to sting the enemy to a furious reply. Sometimes, believing himself attacked, he replied with his full barrage on front trenches and communications; at other times, recognising the ruse, he answered with a retaliatory bombardment intended to be sharply felt. Under these bombardments lay either the ground which the working parties were to entrench, or the approaches to it, and any movement of troops at such times was rendered almost impossible.<sup>21</sup> The first of the “special” bombardments, for example, occurred at 10.15 p.m. on the night of July 29th, when the 21st Battalion was reaching Pozières to relieve the 22nd and 23rd. The answering barrage fell full upon “K” Trench, through which the battalion must pass. So heavy was the fire that, as there was no urgent reason for incurring heavy loss, the relief was stopped after a platoon and a half had got through. All the guides provided by the 22nd were worn out, and most of them wounded. Major Duggan<sup>22</sup> of the 21st, who was at 22nd Battalion Headquarters making arrangements for the relief, left that position about 3 a.m., but the second “special” bombardment, at 2.55, provoked a renewal of the German shelling, and the

<sup>21</sup> The 2nd Division had been warned by corps headquarters that heavy fire from the enemy must be expected during the days of preparation, and that the garrison of Pozières must therefore be kept low; there is no evidence, however, that the probable effect of particular bombardments upon the working parties was realised.

<sup>22</sup> Lieut.-Col. B. O. C. Duggan, D.S.O. Commanded 21st Bn., 1917/18. Farmer; of St. Arnaud, Vic.; b. Sutherland, Vic., 12 Jan., 1887.

face of the ground was by that time so changed that the guides could not recognise it; Duggan returned at 5 a.m., after having been completely lost. It was not until this barrage slackened that the 21st continued its relief.

German accounts show that the II/162nd in the O.G. Lines north-east of Pozières had reported at 3 a.m. that it was being attacked. The German official history says that the Australians attempted to assault three times but that each attempt was smothered in the German artillery-barrage!

During the night of the 30th, although there were two short "special" bombardments, the enemy's reply was less violent, his artillery staff probably recognising that they were merely a ruse. But on the evening of the 31st, when the main programme of works began, the demolition bombardments also began: from 6 to 7 p.m. ten batteries of heavy howitzers pounded the O.G. Lines; at 10.10 p.m. there broke out a "special" bombardment, and another at 3 a.m. This activity naturally called forth a reply so strong that an observer of the III Corps reported that it might indicate a German attack. It was this counter-bombardment that caused the miscarriage of the 7th Brigade's arrangements on that night; the authorities in rear—as throughout the Pozières fighting—had little conception of the conditions in the front line: it was certainly no pleasant place, and was not much visited by officers of the higher staffs—except of the intelligence branch. On this occasion brigade reports stated next morning that the shelling of Pozières had decreased, and the artillery reported it as "normal." It is true that, partly through the excellent British counter-battery fire, partly from motives of economy, the enemy's artillery was not as active as during the terrible bombardments of July 24th to 26th. But it was constant and at times intense. There exists a vivid account, from the pen of a junior officer, of what the work on the night in question, July 31st, actually meant to the 200 men of the 23rd Battalion who—already strained by the last terrible fight—were sent back to the line and, together with some engineers, in spite of the shelling, carried out part of the task set to the 6th Brigade. The writer was an Australian journalist, Lieutenant J. A. Raws,<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Lieut. J. A. Raws, 23rd Bn. Journalist; of Melbourne; b. Manchester, Eng., 21 Sept., 1883. Killed in action, 23 Aug., 1916.

one of two brothers of fine quality belonging to that battalion. His platoon was included in the working-party.<sup>24</sup> Some readers, judging by their own experience of bombardments in earlier years or on other fronts, have held that such reports as that which follows were exaggerated; but they might as justly have measured a tornado by a dust eddy. The hurricanes which perpetually whirled around a few centres such as Fort Vaux at Verdun, and Delville Wood and Pozières on the Somme, could not be measured by the experience of ordinary battles, or described in the same terms. Not all natures were impressed in the same way, but the narrative is a fair and accurate record of the experience of a sensitive man, and other accounts to be found in soldiers' letters and suchlike intimate records—both German and British—exhibit a striking similarity both of phrase and fact.

The great horror of many of us (says Raws) is the fear of being lost (*i.e.*, losing the way) with troops at night on the battlefield. We do all our fighting and moving at night, and the confusion of passing through a barrage of enemy shells in the dark is pretty appalling. . . .

Our battalion . . . had to march for three miles, under shell-fire, go out into No Man's Land in front of the German trenches, and dig a narrow trench to be used to jump off from in another assault. I was posted in the rear to bring up the rear and prevent straggling. We went in single file along narrow communication trenches. We were shelled all the way up, but got absolute hell when passing through a particularly heavy curtain of fire which the enemy was playing on a ruined village (Pozières). . . . In the midst of this barrage our line was held up. I went up from the rear and found that we had been cut off, about half of us, from the rest of the battalion, and were lost. I would gladly have shot myself, for I had not the slightest idea where our lines or the enemy's were, and the shells were coming at us from, it seemed, three directions. As a matter of fact that was right. Well, we lay down terror-stricken along a bank. The shelling was awful. I took a long drink of neat whisky and went up and down the bank trying to find a man who could tell where we were. Eventually I found one. He led me along a broken track and we found a trench; he said he was sure it led to our lines, so we went back and got the men. It was hard to make them move, they were so badly broken. We eventually found our way to the right spot, out in No Man's Land. Our leader was shot before we arrived, and the strain had sent two other officers mad:<sup>25</sup> I and another new

<sup>24</sup> The 23rd had carried out the attack north of Pozières three nights before, and since that operation Lieutenant R. G. Raws had been missing. He had led the right flank of the battalion, and had in fact been killed at or near the German position. Lieutenant J. A. Raws, whose letters are here quoted, was himself killed during the next tour of his division in the line.

<sup>25</sup> By madness, Raws (as he makes clear later) means unavoidable and "justifiable" loss of self-control. A striking example of the meaning of these terms is given in footnote 31 on p. 710.



officer (Lieutenant Short)<sup>26</sup> took charge and dug the trench. We were being shot at all the time,<sup>27</sup> and I knew that if we did not finish the job before daylight a new assault planned for the next night would fail. It was awful, but we had to drive the men by every possible means and dig ourselves. The wounded and killed had to be thrown on one side—I refused to let any sound man help a wounded man: the sound men had to dig. . . .

Just before daybreak an officer (of another unit) out there, who was hopelessly rattled, ordered us to go.<sup>28</sup> The trench was not finished. I took it on myself to insist on the men staying, saying that any man who stopped digging would be shot. We dug on and finished amid a tornado of bursting shells. All the time, mind, the enemy flares were making the whole area almost as light as day. We got away as best we could. I was buried twice, and thrown down several times—buried with dead and dying. The ground was covered with bodies in all stages of decay and mutilation, and I would, after, struggling free from the earth, pick up a body by me to try to lift him out with me, and find him a decayed corpse. I pulled a head off—was covered with blood. The horror was indescribable. In the dim misty light of dawn I collected about 50 men and sent them off, mad with terror, on the right track for home. Then two brave fellows stayed behind and helped me with the only unburied wounded man we could find. The journey down with him was awful. He was delirious—I tied one of his legs to his pack with one of my puttees. On the way down I found another man and made him stay and help us. It was so terribly slow.

We got down to the first dressing station. There I met another of our men, who was certain that his cobbler was lying wounded in that barrage of fire. I would have given my immortal soul to get out of it, but I simply had to go back with him and a stretcher-bearer. We spent two hours in that devastated village searching for wounded—but all were dead. The sights I saw during that search, and the smell, can, I know, never be exceeded by anything else the war may show me.

I went up again the next night, and stayed up there. We were shelled to hell ceaselessly. X—went mad and disappeared.

The experiences to which the infantry were at this stage subjected ripped away in a few moments all those conventions behind which civilised men shelter their true souls even

<sup>26</sup> A colleague of Raws on the Melbourne *Argus* (Capt. L. G. Short, M.C.; 23rd Bn. Journalist; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Herne Hill, London, Eng., 3 June, 1885). "Short was wonderful," says Raws, "quiet, serene, philosophic, though shelled from trench to trench and crater to crater. I saw him, calm and collected, when giants of physical strength were cowed and helpless—it was . . . just the fine spirit in that frail body." Short, afterwards writing of Raws, said that his actions this night won him the esteem of all who knew of them, and—had he not been soon afterwards killed—assured his future in the battalion. The leader of the whole party, who had been hit, was Captain F. H. Ward (of Kyneton, Vic.). He died next day.

<sup>27</sup> Capt. Short has recorded his impression that the Germans did not see—and were not firing at—the working party, but were laying their barrage on the trenches behind it. Many of the men, he says, "were nervy and shaken." Raws says: "It seems impossible to think that I did—though I remember clearly that I did—say most dreadful things to broken men to shake them into activity for some last enterprise."

<sup>28</sup> It is almost certain that this officer was merely carrying out an order to send the working parties back before the "special" bombardment timed for 3 a.m.

from the milder breezes of life, and left them facing the storm with no other protection than the naked framework of their character. The strain eventually became so great that what is rightly known as courage—the will to persist—would not suffice, since, however keen his will, the machinery of a man's self-control might become deranged. The same officer wrote:

I have had much luck and kept my nerve so far. The awful difficulty is to keep it. The bravest of all often lose it—courage does not count here. It is all nerve—once that goes one becomes a gibbering maniac. The noise of our own guns, the enemy's shells, and the getting lost in the darkness. . . .

Only the men you would have trusted and believed in before proved equal to it. One or two of my friends stood splendidly, like granite rocks round which the seas stormed in vain. They were all junior officers; but many other fine men broke to pieces. Everyone called it shell-shock, but shell-shock is very rare. What 90 per cent. get is justifiable funk, due to the collapse of the helm—of self-control.

The shelling at Pozières did not merely probe character and nerve; it laid them stark naked as no other experience of the A.I.F. ever did. In a single tour of this battle divisions were subjected to greater stress than in the whole Gallipoli campaign. The shell-fire was infinitely worse than that subsequently experienced in the Third Battle of Ypres, but with one mitigating circumstance: it was only the infantry and their associated front-line units who suffered severely. The bombardment was almost confined to the forward area. Despite several sharp visitations upon troops in Sausage Gully and Tara Hill (east of Albert), the successive rows of field artillery had actually to be protected against fire from the rear more securely than against that from the front—the defective shells from the new British and American ammunition factories, and those of the old 4.7-inch battery in Sausage Gully, being more dangerous to the guns' crews than the fire of the enemy.<sup>29</sup> But the area in which the infantry lived was shelled till there remained (to quote Raws again)—

nothing but a churned mass of debris with bricks, stones, and girders, and bodies pounded to nothing. And forests! There are not even tree trunks left, not a leaf or a twig. All is buried, and churned up

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<sup>29</sup> The British field-guns also, at this stage, were constantly put out of action—chiefly by internal trouble in their buffer springs, due to incessant use.

again, and buried again. The sad part is that one can see no end of this. If we live to-night, we have to go through to-morrow night, and next week, and next month. Poor wounded devils you meet on the stretchers are laughing with glee. One cannot blame them—they are getting out of this. . . .

. . . We are lousy, stinking, ragged, unshaven, sleepless. . . I have one puttee, a dead man's helmet, another dead man's gas protector, a dead man's bayonet. My tunic is rotten with other men's blood, and partly splattered with a comrade's brains. . . .

To cover up the corpses, which lay thickly about Dead Man's Road and other approaches, a party of the 6th Brigade was organised under Sergeant Lang<sup>30</sup> of the 24th, who, with the assistance of Chaplains Durnford,<sup>31</sup> Clune,<sup>32</sup> and others,<sup>33</sup> buried several hundreds, their work being afterwards taken up by a standing fatigue party of 100 men.<sup>34</sup> Only the devotion of one or two junior leaders had made possible the work done by the 6th Brigade on the night of July 31st. It is obvious that, if troops were to be asked to perform under these conditions fatigue duties that only indirectly concerned themselves, extraordinary qualities of leadership were necessary. If there were any defects in that respect, nothing was likely to be accomplished. As already stated, Legge, conceiving that the 5th Brigade must be worn out, applied to Birdwood on July 31st for assistance from the 4th Division, but Holmes refused the proffered help, and such was the effect on the tired units of his ceaseless driving and cheery personality—and so excellent was his young corps of officers—that the 5th Brigade's achievement at least equalled that of either of its sisters. This was all the more remarkable since, from the day when it entered the line (north of

<sup>30</sup> Sgt. W. Lang, M.M. (No. 1812; 24th Bn.). Labourer; of Melbourne, Vic.; b. Glasgow, Scotland, 1883.

<sup>31</sup> Chaplain the Rev. F. H. Durnford, M.C. Of Burra and Berri districts, S. Aust.; b. Lyminster, Sussex, Eng., 7 Jan., 1882.

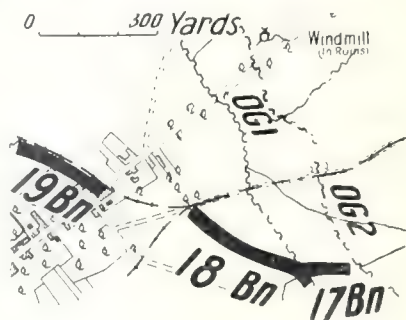
<sup>32</sup> Chaplain the Rev. F. Clune, M.C. Of Sydney; b. 17 March, 1869.

<sup>33</sup> Durnford and Clune both employed these dreadful days in stretcher-bearing, water-carrying, and such tasks of mercy in the dangerous area. Chaplain Dexter, with support from the Australian Comforts Fund, established at the corner of Bécourt Wood a coffee stall which henceforth became a cherished institution on the edge of every Australian battlefield.

<sup>34</sup> At the beginning of August, 4 officers and 400 men of the 13th Battalion were employed on regular fatigues—chiefly burying and salvage. After the next operation a report that the dead still lay thickly about the approaches to Pozzières reached the ears of General Gough, and it was suggested that for the sake of the morale of incoming troops these should have been buried. Accordingly on August 6 Birdwood's chief medical officer, Colonel Manifold, with representatives of the Army and Corps staffs, specially visited Pozzières. Finding the whole area under severe shell-fire, they reported that it was simply a question of military expediency whether the dead should be allowed to lie unburied, or whether more lives should be risked through attempting to bury them.



Pozières) to the day on which it went out, the 18th Battalion was consistently shelled by the artillery of its own side. Daily complaints—and even conferences of artillery and infantry officers in the front line when it was actually being shelled—never succeeded in correcting this error, which from first to last is said to have caused at least 150 casualties.<sup>35</sup> But the 18th was commanded by one of the best leaders in the A.I.F., Lieutenant-Colonel Wisdom; and the 19th, which for eleven days occupied Tramway Trench at the Bapaume road under incessant barrage, was sustained by a magnificent staff of juniors.<sup>36</sup>



The 7th Brigade was subject to special disadvantages. It was not in the front line, and therefore had to send up its working parties nightly from Tara Hill, two and a half miles in rear, to work in ground not well known to them. In the Pozières fighting an additional and serious difficulty was that not only were parts of old trenches every day filled in and blocked by shell-fire, so that it was sometimes impossible even to trace their original course, but there had come into existence a maze of new trenches unmarked in the maps but constantly referred to by name in orders which laid down routes and rendezvous for incoming units or working parties. It was now realised that maps with the trench-names marked should be issued every few days. This was done, the maps being roughly drawn and reproduced on foolscap sheets at the headquarters of the 2nd Division. Accurate information as to the situation even

<sup>35</sup> In their efforts to check the error, artillery officers were hampered by the fact that during this period the fire was incessant, rendering it very difficult to identify the shell-bursts of any particular battery. The experience was almost inevitable. French and Germans constantly suffered similar loss. The historian of the 64th R.I.R., which later in August held the German line east of the Windmill, estimates that, owing to uncertainty as to its position, its front posts had to reckon on receiving daily 40 to 50 of their own shells, "which by no means tended to heighten their spirits!"

<sup>36</sup> These included Captain Heritage, who was killed while observing from the front line. He had rowed in the New South Wales eight at Henley.



of their own front trenches was obtained by the staff (and by the draughtsmen who made the maps) almost exclusively from aeroplane-photographs.<sup>37</sup> These, if taken in the early morning, would be hurriedly developed and printed at the aerodrome, and sent by motor-cycle to reach the headquarters of the corps and the division by the afternoon. The prints would clearly show the disappearance of trenches under the latest bombardment, and the extension of trenches and saps by the previous night's working-parties; but this precious assistance to brigadiers and battalion commanders was as yet rarely provided.

It was ascertained that the working parties of the 7th Brigade had on the first night reached their several rendezvous near Pozières; but their engineers had been prevented by shell-fire from marking out the "jumping-off" line, and the troops, after waiting most of the night in the communication trenches, had been sent back. Thus one of the two precious available nights had elapsed without any result, so far as the 7th Brigade was concerned, except to tire and disconcert the troops. On the following night, in consequence of Legge's order, the commander of the 27th Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Dollman,<sup>38</sup> was appointed to control the parties in person. In order to reduce the artillery activity a special bombardment, which was to have occurred early in the night, was cancelled.<sup>39</sup> An hour's heavy bombardment, however, was laid down before dusk, stirring up a furious reply which lasted far into the night.

On this occasion part of the work was carried through. A considerable section of the trench north of the main road was marked out—Lieutenant Richardson<sup>40</sup> of the 2nd Pioneers being killed while taping it—and the 2nd Pioneers and part of the 27th Battalion commenced digging. The 7th Brigade

<sup>37</sup> These were taken by the squadron attached to the Anzac Corps. This was the 7th Squadron, R.F.C., which had previously served with the Corps at Armentières.

<sup>38</sup> Col. W. Dollman, V.D. Commanded 27th Bn., 1915/16. Accountant; of Unley, S. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 20 Feb., 1873.

<sup>39</sup> The working parties were informed that no bombardments would take place this night between 9 and 4 o'clock. The information proved incorrect, notice arriving later of a "special" bombardment at 3.10 a.m. The C.R.E., 2nd Division, afterwards complained that the orders of the Corps artillery staff for "special" bombardments were frequently issued too late to allow the digging parties to be warned before starting.

<sup>40</sup> Lieut. E. A. Richardson, 2nd Pioneer Bn. Of Melbourne; b. North Ockenden, Essex, Eng., 30 Oct., 1880. Killed in action, 2 Aug., 1916.

reported next morning that its forward line had been almost completed; Colonel Dollman estimated that, although the brigade's work had again been delayed by shelling and was unfinished on the left, it could be completed by 200 men working for two hours. The 6th Brigade reported its tasks practically finished.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless it was evident that another night's digging would be necessary, and the flanking corps were accordingly warned that the attack must be deferred until August 3rd, by which date the 2nd Divisional staff felt sure of being ready. The completion of the work was to be supervised on the night of the 2nd by the acting-commander of the 28th, Major A. W. Leane,<sup>42</sup> an officer of high repute and member of a family whose name in the Australian service was becoming a hallmark for the power of leadership. At corps headquarters, however, General White suspected that the expectations of readiness were again too optimistic. Aeroplane-photographs taken that day showed that the "jumping-off" trench was far from completion, and a personal visit to all the brigades entirely confirmed White's fears. On his return he telephoned to the headquarters of General Gough—whose tendency throughout was to press for an early attack—that the 2nd Division could not be ready by August 3rd. The answer was that Legge had stated the opposite. "Well, you can order them to attack if you like," replied White, "but I tell you this . . . and this . . ." stating certain facts known to him. The army commander at once postponed the operation<sup>43</sup> until Friday, August 4th. For some reason which is not obvious,

<sup>41</sup> Working parties of the 6th Brigade had this night been hampered by a German searchlight being turned upon them. It was eventually suppressed by howitzer fire.

<sup>42</sup> Lieut.-Col. A. W. Leane. Commanded 28th Bn., 1916. Manufacturers' agent; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Mount Gambier, S. Aust., 11 May, 1871. Died of wounds, 4 Jan., 1917.

<sup>43</sup> Gough wrote to Birdwood asking for an explanation from Legge of the several postponements and adding what amounted to a request for Birdwood's opinion as to that general's ability. Birdwood, who withheld this letter from Legge until the worry of the operation was over, replied that the preparations had been rendered difficult through shell-fire, and that in accordance with the Australian Government's policy of appointing Australian commanders, he was anxious to give Legge a fair chance. On receiving the letter Legge himself pointed out that his original estimate had been based on the express proviso that the preparations were not seriously interfered with by the enemy. The work had, however, been disorganised by very heavy bombardment.

The army threw upon subordinate generals the whole responsibility for difficult operations on narrow fronts, and it seems fair that those generals should have been allowed to make such alterations in plan as they found necessary.

however, it was not considered practicable to defer any longer certain subsidiary operations by the corps on each flank; and these now took place as two widely separated operations on the night of Thursday, August 3rd.<sup>44</sup> Nor was the postponement altogether welcome to Legge's staff. In a note to the brigadiers Colonel Bridges made the comment: "This gives us a bit more time for preparation, and more time to the Boche too!"

The delay was entirely justified by the result. On the night of August 2nd a demolition-bombardment from 8 to 9 p.m. again caused the German signal rockets and flares to rise in sheaves, and brought down a tempest through which even runners with messages could not penetrate.

German records show that the 18th Reserve Division, then holding the front opposite the I Anzac Corps, reported that at 9 a.m. it had beaten off an infantry attack on both sides of the Bapaume road! It is possible that this impression was caused by the sight of parties working on the "jumping-off" trench.

In the confusion of this night the 26th Australian Battalion, sent up to assist in completing the 7th Brigade's task, caught some local or sectional order to retire, and withdrew, taking with it portions of other working parties. Ninety men of the 27th, brought up by Captain Dey<sup>45</sup> after midnight, were able to work for about two hours, and Leane, after inspecting the result, reported that 550 yards of the "jumping-off" trench had been dug; more than a quarter of this work, however, was only one or two feet in depth. Even this estimate—which subsequently proved to be excessive—showed that the



necessary works were far from finished. Actually, none of the brigades had fully completed their task. To help forward

<sup>44</sup> See pp. 670-1.

<sup>45</sup> Capt. G. Dey, 27th Bn. Metallurgist; of Port Pirie, S. Aust.; b. Mosgiel, N.Z., 30 Sept., 1882.

the work on the following night, Birdwood for once permitted working parties to stack their rifles and kit at convenient alarm-posts some distance in rear, if the situation allowed, instead of carrying them to the actual site of their work. To assure, if possible, completion of the 7th Brigade's "jumping-off" trench, one of its battalions, the 25th, took over before nightfall the front line in that sector. The commander of this battalion, Colonel Walker, was a contractor, accustomed to the handling of men, and in the A.I.F. he had a wide reputation for crude fearlessness based on deliberate exposure of himself to danger.<sup>46</sup> As soon as his battalion had relieved the 19th, about 10 o'clock on the night of August 3rd, he led his men out to the position, and, with Captain Webb<sup>47</sup> of the 7th Field Company (formerly Chief Magnetician of the Mawson expedition to the Antarctic) and Lieutenants Healy<sup>48</sup> and Stuart,<sup>49</sup> placed two of his companies upon the line to be completed.<sup>50</sup>

The bombardment that night was again furious; the operations by the flanking corps, originally devised to coincide with those of I Anzac, were taking place, and "special" bombardments on the Anzac front had been arranged for 9.50 p.m. and 3.20 a.m.

German records make it evident that these bombardments, coming on top of the already protracted strain, resulted in another false alarm, the 18th Reserve Division reporting<sup>51</sup> that the 162nd I.R.,

<sup>46</sup> On 18 June, 1916, in the wretched trenches opposite Messines, Walker found the men in a sector of his front line somewhat cowed by an enemy sniper. The company commander, Captain R. J. Lewis, had just been shot through the brain while looking over the parapet, and the same fate had befallen the man who took his place. A number of periscopes were broken. "Always this talk of getting shot!" he exclaimed. "We'll see if they can shoot." Putting his elbows on the parapet, he looked over. After one bullet and then another had narrowly missed his head—"The man's a damn bad shot," he said. "That was six inches away. Here, give us a rifle and I'll teach the beggar." As he took the rifle another bullet hit the sandbags. After letting the German have a fourth shot to show where he was, "There you are, me man!" exclaimed Walker, and fired. Though he was a very good shot, it is hardly likely that he hit his opponent; but an eyewitness has stated that, whatever the reason, the German ceased fire.

<sup>47</sup> Maj. E. N. Webb, D.S.O., M.C.; 7th Field Coy. Engrs. Civil engineer; of Christchurch, N.Z.; b. Lyttelton, N.Z., 23 Nov., 1889.

<sup>48</sup> Lieut. W. P. Healy, M.C.; 25th Bn. Warehouseman; of Sydney, N.S.W., and Wellington, N.Z.; b. Wellington, 1877. Killed in action, 14 Nov., 1916.

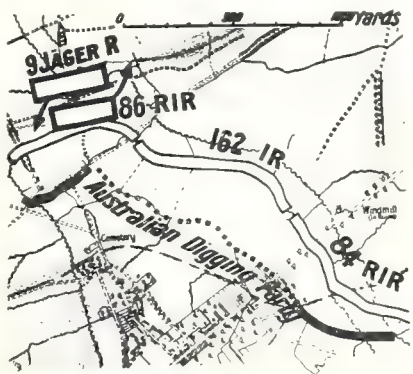
<sup>49</sup> Lieut. A. Stuart, 25th Bn. Station hand; b. Kirkwall, Orkney Islands, 22 Aug., 1881. Killed in action, 5 Aug., 1916.

<sup>50</sup> Colonel Walker afterwards reported that he found that very little digging had previously been done even on the southern half of the line, and that 300 yards on the left was merely "spitlocked."

<sup>51</sup> The report was sent in at noon on the 4th, but presumably refers to the previous night.



holding the O.G. Lines north of the windmill and the adjoining sector along Brind's Road, had been attacked along its whole front. The attacking force was reported to have been caught in the German barrage, and defeated with heavy loss; from the windmill southwards, on the front of the 84th R.I.R. (said the report) it had apparently been broken by the barrage, since no movement had developed. This report of an operation, which, so far as it concerned the fronts of the 162nd and 84th, was entirely imaginary, may again have been due to the detection of the 25th Battalion and troops of the 6th Brigade working upon the "jumping-off" trench, together with the news of the British attack on Fifth Avenue.<sup>52</sup> The German divisional staff recorded its impression that a strong attack had been made from the north of Pozzières towards the east with a subsidiary attack



(by the 12th British Division) against the 117th Division. It inferred that the Australian attack had been suppressed by the barrage, and that the British assault, though temporarily and partly successful, had no chance of ultimate success. The 9th Jäger Battalion (which had that night relieved the 86th R.I.R. on the front north of Pozzières) had been ordered to assist the 117th Division to retake the lost trenches.<sup>53</sup>

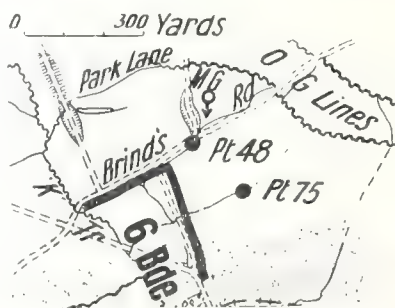
Although no-one on the Australian side was aware of the precise motives that caused the enemy to lay down that night's bombardment, its results were soon apparent. In the 25th Battalion 5 officers and 80 men were killed or otherwise placed out of action.<sup>54</sup> But Colonel Walker with his assistants kept the troops as far as possible upon the work, and in the morning he reported that "what was really a day's work was completed in three or four hours." In the 5th Brigade sector all the forward trenches and saps had been personally visited on August 3rd by General Holmes, who had stirred his heavily worked units to finish

<sup>52</sup> The assault by the British 34th Division on Intermediate Trench, some distance beyond the other flank of I Anzac, occurred on the same night but is not referred to in the report above quoted.

<sup>53</sup> The 12th Division had actually seized and held much more than its objective, and the counter-attacks by the 11th R.I.R. and 9th Jäger Battalion failed.

<sup>54</sup> Lieutenant J. L. Fletcher (of Cunnamulla, Q'land) was wounded while bringing up the troops; 2 officers and 55 men were killed or wounded; and 2 officers and 15 men buried or badly shell-shocked. Some of the casualties appear to have been caused by the erratic fire of the supporting guns, which at this stage were suffering from mechanical troubles due partly to excessive use.

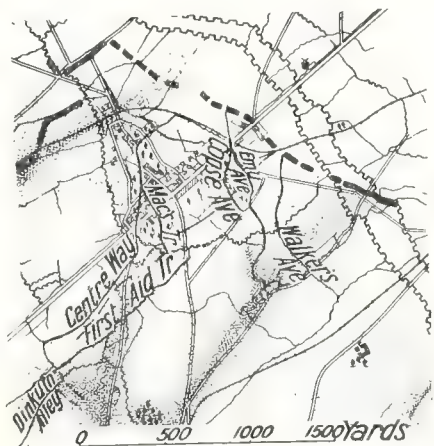
an uncompleted sector south of the main road where they had been continually shelled by the supporting guns. The 6th Brigade, working to the last, had also completed its task. Thus a "jumping-off" trench had, apparently, been provided along the whole front, although at an average distance of 300 yards (instead of 200 as in the order) from the enemy lines, and only roughly parallel to them. Behind it, on each flank, emplacements had been dug for a number of trench-mortars, from which smoke bombs were to be fired by a detachment of the "Special Brigade" of British engineers, in order to raise a cloud screening the flanks. It was known that one part of the 6th Brigade's preparatory work had not been accomplished. This was the seizure of a German machine-gun post known to exist on the northern side of the Ovillers-Courcelette (Brind's) road, along part of which the northern flank of the 6th Brigade already lay. The post, although the Australians were not aware of the fact, was one of a series in the Neuer Ganter Weg, and formed part of the enemy front-line system. Persistent attempts to capture it as a preliminary to the main attack failed.<sup>55</sup> This failure was to have serious results.



In rear of each brigade's front line large fatigue parties, working day and night for a week, had completed the necessary communication trenches, finally extending them across the Bapaume road, despite the shelling which never ceased upon that highway. The avenues thus driven across the road were Centre Way, leading to the left centre; "Copse Avenue," to

<sup>55</sup> Probably an early attempt to extend this flank along Brind's Road forms the basis of the exaggerated account of an attack given in the *History of the 86th R.I.R.*, p. 146. On the night of July 31 a party of the 6th Brigade occupied what was at first thought to be the site of the German post above referred to, and forthwith connected it by a trench with the Australian line. It was then found that the German post lay still farther ahead, and two attempts were made at night by a party under Lieutenant R. G. Moss (of Bairnsdale, Vic.), 23rd Battalion, first to locate and then to capture it. A barrage was laid around it, but the assault failed, a number of men being hit.

the right centre; and a short sap known as "Mac's Trench" connecting the other two.<sup>56</sup> "Emu Avenue," farther to the right, was also to have crossed the road; but when the 4th Pioneers were lined out to make the extension, 7 were killed and 23 wounded within a quarter of an hour; its course was then altered to strike the front line south of the road. Farther south another approach had been provided by an extension of "Walker's Avenue." These trenches had been dug mainly by the 2nd and 4th Pioneer Battalions and the 6th, 7th, and 13th



Field Companies, which with large fatigue parties of all brigades worked day and night. The severity of the task may be judged by the fact that the 4th Pioneers alone lost 8 officers and 222 men in ten days, mainly while digging and keeping open the section of Copse Avenue at the main road, where the trench was levelled almost daily by the enemy barrage. As a result of this work Legge was able, in his operation order of August 3rd, to choose Centre Way as the approach for the 6th Brigade, Copse Avenue for the 7th, and Emu and Walker's for the 5th.<sup>57</sup> Other preparations arranged for the use of horse-transport farther forward than it had hitherto been employed, so as to save needless carrying by men. The task of evacuating wounded from the

<sup>56</sup> Mac's Trench connected Centre Way with First Aid Trench, which led to Copse Avenue. Copse Avenue was an extension of the old trench dug round Pozieres copse during the 1st Division's attack.

<sup>57</sup> The routes detailed in this order were:—

*6th Brigade:* Centre Way to near Gibraltar and thence either by "K" Trench or Centre Way.

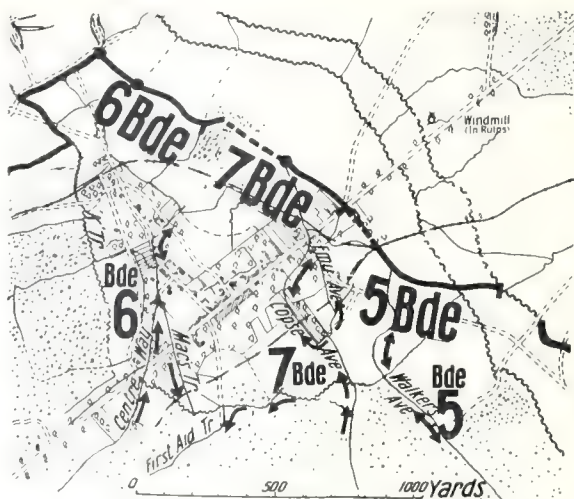
*7th Brigade:* Sunken Road—Copse Avenue.

*5th Brigade:* Sunken Road—Copse Avenue—Emu Avenue; or Sunken Road—Walker's Avenue (as far as possible, the 5th Brigade was to use the latter route).

Mac's Trench was allotted for diverting some of the returning wounded of the 6th Brigade into First Aid Trench, which, with Pozieres Trench, "Long Drive," Pioneer Trench, the Chalk Pit Road, and the Tramline, was appointed for out-traffic.



aid-posts was in the hands of the 5th Field Ambulance, which had dressing stations in Albert and at Bécourt Château, and had under its orders the bearer-sections of the 6th, 7th, and 12th Field Ambulances as well as its own. But the chief difficulty in evacuation was



in the front area, the nearest shelter to which regimental bearers could bring their patients being 2,000 yards behind the front line. Although their numbers had been specially increased from 16 to 24, such a "carry" was likely to exhaust them.

Both British corps on the flanks had carried out their operations on the night of August 3rd; those of the III Corps failed, the 34th Division taking part of the Intermediate Trench but being later driven out. A projected attempt on Munster Alley and Torr Trench by the 23rd Division had been deferred in order to coincide with the Australian attack, and it was decided to renew the attack on Intermediate Trench at the same time. On the left of I Anzac, the 12th Division met with signal success in its operations against the uncaptured section of Fourth Avenue—one of the successive trenches west of "K."



Missing its direction, part of the 36th Brigade seized a section of Fifth Avenue ("Ration Trench"), and a patrol of the 7th Royal Sussex actually reached and



temporarily occupied part of Sixth Avenue ("Skyline Trench"), from which it looked into the valley west of Mouquet Farm.<sup>58</sup> It was driven out by a counter-attack from the farm. But the western part of Fifth Avenue was held, although an attack on the German strong-point at its junction with "K" Trench was for the third time defeated.<sup>59</sup> It was therefore decided to complete the capture of Fifth Avenue on the following night in conjunction with the main Australian attack, but to leave the strong-point to be dealt with after that operation. Such was the position on the afternoon of August 4th when the brigades of the 2nd Australian Division moved off on the approach-march for their second attempt upon the O.G. Lines.

The last demolition-bombardment was to open at 6 p.m. and continue for an hour.<sup>60</sup> The artillery would then fire normally until 9 p.m., when it would cease for a quarter of an hour—as it had frequently done in the programme of "special" bombardments. At 9.15 the field-guns would lay down an intense barrage on O.G.1 for three minutes, the heavy howitzers firing as usual one simultaneous salvo upon that trench. After three minutes the field-guns would lift their barrage to O.G.2; the heavies, lifting in the same way, would fire a second salvo and then turn upon all German batteries whose positions were known. The first

<sup>58</sup> Particulars of the 12th Division's attack are as follows. Part of Fourth Avenue adjoining "K" Trench had already been taken, and small attacks to increase that holding had been made, with slight success, by parties from the 11th Middlesex and 7th Royal Sussex on the nights of July 30 and 31. During the next few days the division prepared a rather more extensive night attack on the whole uncaptured portion of Fourth Avenue, to be carried out by parts of two brigades. The enemy's position had been bombarded by siege artillery and heavy trench-mortars, and the 8th Royal Fusiliers (36th Brigade) not only captured their objective, but, missing the direction, seized on their left a strong-point (which was to have been attacked on the following night) and the western end of the next trench—Fifth Avenue (more generally known, from the German ration parties which used to traverse it, as "Ration Trench"). Here part of the 6th Buffs (37th Brigade) went through them and bombed up Fifth Avenue; and, a company of the 7th Royal Sussex being sent to reinforce, a patrol under Lieutenants E. G. Routley (of the Buffs) and C. F. Rolfe (of the 7th R. Sussex) and Company Sergeant-Major Lond (of the Buffs) actually moved over to Sixth Avenue on the skyline on the next spur (and, for that reason, commonly known as "Skyline Trench"). From this deep new work, which appeared to be occupied by only a few of the enemy, one of whom was rushed by Lond, they looked down into the valley at the head of which stood Mouquet Farm. They were seen by the garrison of the next trench Thiépval way, and were counter-attacked and driven out by a force advancing from the farm, the gallant Lond being shot during the withdrawal.

<sup>59</sup> This point was assaulted by the 7th Royal Sussex. The previous attempts had been made by the 8th Warwicks and 11th Middlesex on the nights of July 27 and 29 respectively.

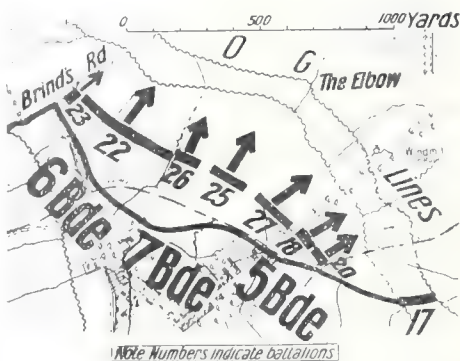
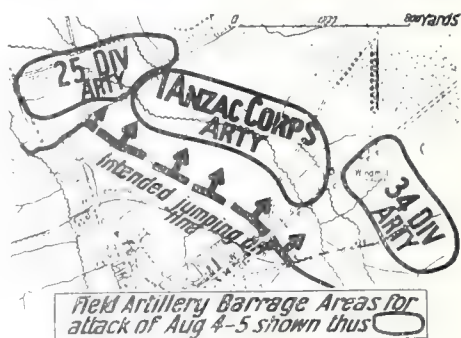
<sup>60</sup> When it was decided to prolong the preparation over August 3 and 4, this additional demolition-bombardment and several more "special" bombardments had been ordered.

two waves of infantry would take O.G.1 and the third and fourth would move up to deliver at 9.30—when the barrage would again lengthen—the assault on O.G.2.<sup>61</sup>

A fifth wave, composed of detachments from the troops forming the other waves, would follow the other four as carrying party. Only the first two would start from the new "jumping-off" trench, the third and fourth

moving from the Tramway Trench and the carriers assembling behind the fourth wave in the communication trenches. The front to be attacked was allotted (from left to right) as follows: O.G. Lines from Brind's Road for 350 yards south-eastwards, to the 22nd Battalion (6th Brigade); the same lines for 900 yards farther southwards, including The Elbow, to the 7th Brigade, whose battalions would be in the same order as before, except that the 27th (South Australia) took the place of the 28th (Western Australia), which had suffered so heavily in the previous assault. South of the road the 5th Brigade would attack as far south as the old railway, having

the 18th Battalion next to the road and the 20th (facing this enterprise for the third time) next to the railway. As air-photographs showed that O.G.2 opposite the 5th Brigade's sector and near the windmill had been destroyed, Legge appears to have intended that only O.G.1 should be formally attacked in this part, and O.G.2 merely occupied by strong



<sup>61</sup> The composition of the waves had been changed, each attacking battalion having two companies in the first two waves, and two in the third and fourth.



#### 48. POZIÈRES CEMETERY

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E1.  
Taken on 27th November, 1916.*



#### 49. STAKES OF THE OLD GERMAN WIRE IN FRONT OF THE "O.G. LINES"

This photograph, taken on 11th October, 1916, looks north-west towards the windmill, which is seen on the horizon.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E13.*

*To face p. 672.*





50. THE PLATEAU EAST OF POZIÈRES, ACROSS WHICH THE ATTACKS OF JULY 28-29TH AND AUGUST 4TH WERE DELIVERED

Photograph taken on 28th August, 1916, from "Centre Way" where the old railway crossed it, east of the cemetery. The view is E.S.E. towards O.G.1, which rims the horizon. The windmill (then a mound) can just be seen on the sky-line above the trench.



patrols with Lewis guns;<sup>62</sup> but his order was open to other interpretations, and the brigade commander arranged for a formal assault upon both lines. On the extreme right flank the short sector of the O.G. Lines south of the railway was to be made good by bombing. On the extreme left the 23rd Battalion (6th Brigade) was to connect the existing flank with the O.G. Lines by forming a series of posts along Brind's Road. As the whole operation was only a preliminary to the northward thrust, which Gough was eager to commence, it was ordered that after the night's advance no time must be lost in ascertaining whether the German trenches north of the northern flank were strongly held. The advance to Mouquet Farm, it was anticipated, would be made in two steps, the first of which it might be found possible to launch even on that night. Such a possibility, however, was not thought likely, and, with a view to launching the northward advance on the night of August 5th, Legge was ordered to confer with the commander of the 4th Division, whose foremost brigade was already on the battlefield and providing carrying-parties.<sup>63</sup>

The night of August 4th-5th was followed by days so overwhelming in strain, anxiety, and eventual relief, that even the bare outlines of its true story were left unascertained;<sup>64</sup> nor was it realised how nearly the operation came to disaster. To watchers at brigade headquarters the signs on this night were very different from those on July 29th, being favourable from the outset.

At 9.15 (wrote one spectator) we opened 3 minutes' bombardment with all field-guns and some big guns. . . . After 3 minutes, bombardment lengthened. Before this the Germans had put up red flares (breaking into stars) from three points. After 13 minutes our bombardment lengthened again. The German flares ceased, except in left-hand corner.<sup>65</sup> . . .

9.48. Two green flares and an odd one. That means 22nd is "in" (*i.e.*, that the 22nd Battalion had reached the O.G. Lines—three pairs of green flares being the arranged signal).

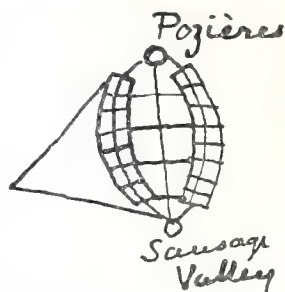
<sup>62</sup> This suggestion came from General Gough. The corps staff ordered that the shell-craters occupied by the patrols should subsequently be linked up into a trench.

<sup>63</sup> The 46th Battalion (12th Brigade) had been detailed for this duty in the attack.

<sup>64</sup> An official narrative of the I Anzac Corps, for example, passes over the crisis of the action with the misstatement: "by 9 p.m. . . . all troops were in position."

<sup>65</sup> Flares soon afterwards rose opposite all parts of the front; but they were 500 yards farther back than before.

Extraordinary measures had been taken to ensure uninterrupted telephone communication as far forward as Gibraltar at least, not less than thirty miles of wire having been laid in one system of "ladders" (an arrangement—roughly shown in the marginal diagram—by which connection could be maintained in spite of numerous breaks). Consequently communication was good almost throughout the night,<sup>66</sup> and within about two hours after the assault it was known at divisional headquarters that all brigades had reached their objectives. The course of the attack (taking the operations from right to left) was as follows.



(From a private diary.)

The right attacking battalion of the 5th Brigade—the 20th—had not completed its assembly when the intense barrage opened; but the junior officers of the rear waves, who were then bringing their platoons up Walker's Avenue, did not wait to assemble them at the front-line trench; they led them straight out into No-Man's Land, and thus made up for the delay.



The left battalion, the 18th, although for a time held up by a block in a forward communication trench,<sup>67</sup> had got through in time, and started precisely as ordered. Officers and men of the 20th, under the strain of two successive failures, had become somewhat "nervy"; but that feeling vanished the

<sup>66</sup> Pigeons could not be used at night; but, among other measures, a French field-searchlight for signalling was carried forward by the 26th Battalion. Its bearer was, however, killed by a shell when crossing No-Man's Land, and the lamp lost.

<sup>67</sup> By a special arrangement, the trench leading to advanced strong-point "37," on the Bapaume road, was to be shared by two brigades; but the 27th Battalion, which was to clear it by 8 p.m., did not clear till 8.30.

moment they were over the parapet. There was practically no fire from the enemy, and the hated tin discs, which were thought to have betrayed the advance on the previous occasion, were now covered and exhibited only when required.<sup>68</sup> Advancing quickly during the three minutes when the barrage lay on O.G.1, and half-trotting over the dry shell-pitted earth, they reached O.G.1 before they were aware of it. The Germans in this sector, when first alarmed, appear to have thrown over their parapet canisters of oil, which, bursting into flame, for a time illuminated a certain area of No-Man's Land. But there was little firing and no loss, except that of the leading company-commander, the gallant Kirke, who was killed at this juncture by a shell. The trench was easily taken, most of the enemy being still in their deep dugouts, from which in most cases they came up and surrendered willingly as soon as a summons was shouted to them. Some, who did not understand and had bombs rolled down upon them, fought; and in the 20th Battalion sector, when an officer and sergeant<sup>69</sup> were exploring the underground chambers after the unwounded Germans had surrendered, a wounded officer lying in a dark corner threw a bomb at them. But for the most part there was no resistance. The prisoners were sent back with returning men of the carrying parties; the dugouts, littered with dirt and equipment, were taken over by the new garrison, with the exception of one which was unapproachable through the stench of corpses. Then the cleaning out of the trench and digging of communication trenches began. Meanwhile the third and fourth waves had gone on to seize O.G.2; but that trench was so damaged that both battalions, eager to find Germans, went beyond it. So swift was the advance of the 18th that Sergeant Bryson<sup>70</sup> had his Lewis gun in position beyond O.G.2 in time to fire at figures of the enemy withdrawing over the edge of the hill.<sup>71</sup> Captain Sadler,<sup>72</sup> whose men had gone too far, had

<sup>68</sup> See footnote 59 on p. 628.

<sup>69</sup> Lieutenant C. Morgan Jones (of Bondi, N.S.W.) and Sergeant T. V. Burnett (of Newtown, N.S.W.).

<sup>70</sup> Sgt. J. L. Bryson, M.M. (No. 1884; 18th Bn.). Seaman; of Pymont, N.S.W.; b. Coupar Angus, Perthshire, Scotland, 1876.

<sup>71</sup> A German officer captured in this sector said that he found himself suddenly surrounded by Australians, who entered his position (Torr Trench) from the rear as well as the front.

<sup>72</sup> Lieut.-Col. R. M. Sadler, D.S.O., M.C. Commanded 17th Bn., 1918/19. Public servant; of Hurstville, N.S.W.; b. Paddington, N.S.W., 8 Oct., 1893.

to pull them back to the line of O.G.2, which could be traced only by the old stakes of the wire-entanglement in front of it. A newly-joined officer of the 20th, Lieutenant Gallagher,<sup>73</sup> afterwards described how he passed this wire without recognising it and then "noticed about a thousand shells bursting in front and realised that it must be our barrage." He instructed the men to fall back about twenty yards, only to be asked by two of them: "Who the hell are you, anyway?" Nevertheless the troops were quickly brought back to O.G.2; the nearer end of Torr Trench was seized and blocked; and, since there was at first no sign of the British who were attacking Munster Alley and the southern part of Torr Trench, a Lewis gun was stationed on that flank. By the time darkness fell the 5th Brigade had secured the whole of O.G.1 south of the road, and its advanced line was digging on the site of O.G.2, with Lewis guns out in front on the ridge and patrols endeavouring to find touch with the next troops of their own side on the flanks. A number of the 7th Brigade came into O.G.1, where the left of the 5th Brigade was digging; but no sign of them could yet be seen towards the windmill. The casualties of the 5th Brigade, so far, were not heavy, being mainly those caused by a scattered and inaccurate machine-gun fire from the unattacked part of the neighbouring sector. This fire would probably have been much heavier, had it not been for the special smoke cloud which, as arranged, was streaming past the southern flank of the brigade's attack, screening it from the enemy beyond. But the 13th Durham Light Infantry (68th Brigade), who were again responsible for the assault upon Munster Alley, derived no assistance from this smoke, but had actually to charge into it. In spite of heavy fire from the enemy barricade, Captain Austin<sup>74</sup> and a few of the Durhams crossed the Alley and entered Torr, and a party under Lieutenant Target<sup>75</sup> then bombed

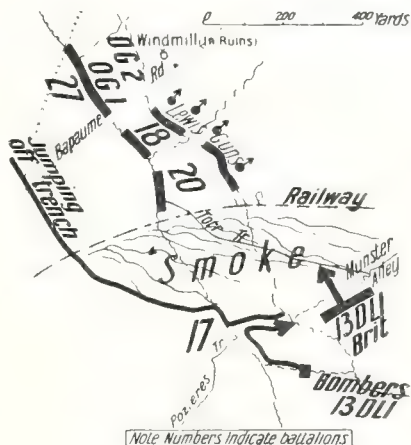
<sup>73</sup> Lieut. P. Gallagher, 20th Bn. Shorthand reporter, Supreme Court of N.S.W.; of Sydney; b. Menangle, N.S.W., 4 Jan., 1887.

<sup>74</sup> Capt. A. H. P. Austin; 13th Bn., Durham Light Infantry. Of Reading, Eng. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

<sup>75</sup> Lieut. N. A. Target, M.C.; 13th Bn., Durham Light Infantry. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.



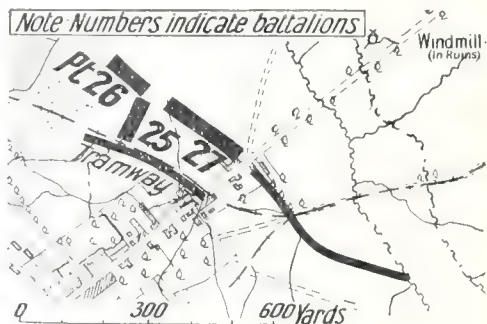
up Munster Alley. Both Austin and Target, however, were killed and the attack failed. The Australian infantry could see and hear this bomb-fighting and, later in the night, the 68th Brigade asked General Holmes for help; but he, while promising to assist with a "bombing demonstration," on this occasion forbade his troops to move beyond the positions they had captured. The other enterprise of the III Corps—the renewed attempt upon Intermediate Trench—also failed.



The advance of the 7th Brigade succeeded almost as swiftly as that of the 5th. Although the battalions moving up into Pozieres had to pass through the strong barrage evoked by the demolition-bombardment from 6 to 7 p.m., they reached the front area in time; but at this stage there occurred a dangerous hitch. Part of the front waves of the 26th, filing through the "jumping-off" trench to reach their proper sector on the left of the brigade, found that, in spite of the reports of its virtual completion, the trench came to an end, little if any of the sector to accommodate their battalion having been dug.<sup>76</sup> Consequently the 26th filled the sector of "jumping-off" trench allotted to the 25th, and the front waves of the 25th were forced to wait crowded in the bottom of the communication trench (known as "Sydney Street") leading to it. These companies in their turn blocked the second wave of the 27th Battalion, but at about 9 o'clock it moved into position across the open, thus allowing the third wave of that battalion to reach its position

<sup>76</sup> Colonel Walker of the 25th, which was responsible for the last night's digging, appears to have believed that the trench had been completed and later broken down by shell-fire. Air-photographs, however, prove that this was not so. The head-quarter's diary of the 7th Brigade accurately states: "We found that at least 250 yards of the left of the jumping-off trench had not been touched."

in Tramway Trench. The fourth, however, was still in a communication trench when the time for attacking arrived. The first three waves of the 27th thus started according to plan. But the fourth, being so far back and so late, caught the enemy's barrage, and lost direction; its commander, Major Cunningham,<sup>77</sup> who led it out from the communication trench, was killed, and many of his men eventually



reached sectors far to right and left of their own. In the 25th Battalion, the rear waves started duly from Tramway Trench; and, though the front waves were launched mainly from a forward communication trench, three of the officers—Captains Stuart and Boys and Lieutenant Healy—had hurriedly agreed to lead their men over the northern side of the sap as soon as the barrage fell and to swing up their left to advance straight upon O.G.I. This they accomplished, although they had to pass through shell-fire and with formation naturally somewhat loose. The 26th was faced with more serious difficulties. Its first wave was in the “jumping off” trench of the 25th, south of its proper area, the second had gone through the trenches farther north<sup>78</sup> and was north of its area, and the rest were in communication trenches to the rear under sharp bombardment. When the artillery opened—the signal for the advance—officers were still organising their men and collecting stragglers; since, however, it was daylight, the situation was apparent, and the leaders of the first two waves ran forward with their men to bridge as best they could the gap between them. The third wave managed to follow in some formation, and the adjutant, Captain

<sup>77</sup> Maj. T. R. Cunningham, 27th Bn. Salt manufacturer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Coleraine, Vic., 27 May, 1874. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

<sup>78</sup> See p. 682.

Robinson,<sup>79</sup> endeavoured to send forward the remainder in the right direction, though piecemeal, from any part of the trenches where he found them. In these circumstances, as on the previous occasion, the 25th and 26th headed too far to the left, leaving O.G.I from The Elbow southwards to the main road to be assaulted by only one battalion, the 27th.



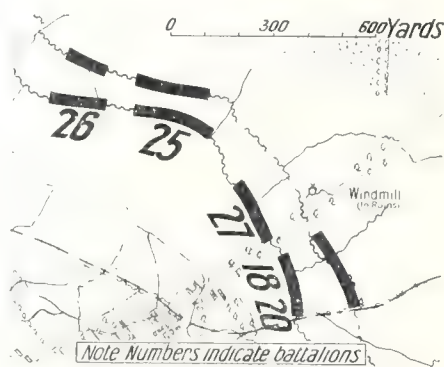
In spite of these difficulties, the foremost waves of the 7th Brigade crossed No-Man's Land without opposition and so swiftly that those of the 25th Battalion are said to have been within twenty-five yards of the barrage when it lifted from O.G.I. Rushing the trench, the 25th found the Germans snug in their dugouts, not yet having begun to mount the stairs and bring out their machine-guns. Most of the garrison's machine-guns, in spite of replacements, appear to have been out of action through shell-fire. But the 27th intercepted Germans coming up from dugouts with their guns, and this proved that even a minute's delay in following the barrage might have been fatal. As matters were, there was no more resistance than in the 5th Brigade's area. Bombs were rolled down the stairs and sentries placed at each entrance, with the result that at intervals during the next fifteen minutes shouts of "Kamerad" were heard and the occupants came up as prisoners.<sup>80</sup> If the occupants showed no sign of emerging, a phosphorus bomb was thrown in. The dense smoke, together with the fear that the place would take fire, scared out of the chambers all except the badly wounded, who ran a terrible chance of being burnt to death. The 26th, having had the worst start, appears to have reached O.G.I later than its sister battalions. However, no

<sup>79</sup> Maj. (tempy. Lieut.-Col.) J. A. Robinson, D.S.O.; 26th Bn. Lecturer in mathematics, Teachers' Training College, Brisbane; b. Nudgee, Q'land, 20 Jan., 1888.

<sup>80</sup> Eleven came from one chamber, nine from another, fourteen from a third, and so on.

machine-guns had yet been mounted, and as the Australians approached, cheering, Germans were seen to leave O.G.1 and run back to O.G.2. Recognising that the later waves of the 26th, which were to attack that part of the second trench, were not yet assembled, Major Currie<sup>81</sup> moved on to assault O.G.2 with most of the first two waves of the battalion, only a few men being left to hold O.G.1. Holding straight on, some of his men ran into their own barrage, which was still on O.G.2, and Currie himself was wounded in the foot; but the trench was rushed and occupied as soon as the barrage lifted. Two machine-guns were found there with their breech-blocks removed, the crews having fled.

Next on the south, the third and fourth waves of the 25th, which had moved forward over O.G.1 in excellent order, on the lifting of the barrage seized O.G.2 north-west of The Elbow. Both the 25th and 26th, however, had made rather too far to the left, and consequently the whole sector between The Elbow and the main road had, as has been mentioned, to be covered by the 27th, whose fourth wave was dispersed. Part of that battalion, under Lieutenant Julge,<sup>82</sup> moved forward from O.G.1 to occupy O.G.2, but the whole area was a wilderness of craters, and, finding no semblance of a trench, Julge and his men advanced in error 100 yards beyond its site and far into their own barrage. A few stayed out here all night, and when—having been wounded—they endeavoured to return in the morning they were captured by Germans who were behind them. Early in the night Julge and others made their way back to O.G.1, which became the front line of the battalion.

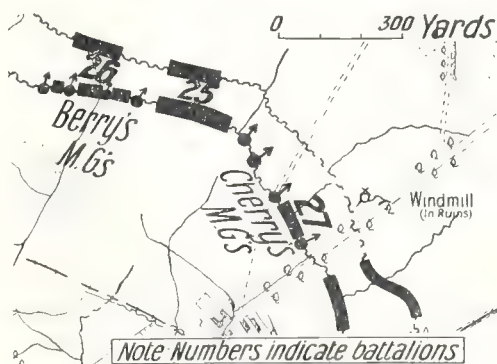


<sup>81</sup> Lieut.-Col. P. Currie, C.M.G., D.S.O. Commanded 28th Bn., 1918/19. School teacher; of Sandgate, Q'land; b. Nambour, Q'land, 2 Aug., 1883.

<sup>82</sup> Capt. (temp. Major) P. E. Julge, M.C.; 27th Bn. Hardware merchant; of Southwark, S. Aust.; b. Southwark, 14 July, 1894.



Even this line was but weakly held,<sup>83</sup> owing to the sister battalions having swerved to the north. Captain Devonshire,<sup>84</sup> on whom the command of this part of the front line had fallen, at once discovered the gap on his left; but the immediate arrival of four Vickers machine-guns of the 7th Company, under Lieutenant Cherry,<sup>85</sup> enabled him to fill it, these guns then becoming the main defence of the sector immediately south of The Elbow. Farther north Lieutenant Murray<sup>86</sup> had been killed while taking forward four other guns of the same company, but Lieutenant Berry<sup>87</sup> had emplaced them in O.G.1 on the left of the brigade. Lieutenant Lennon<sup>88</sup> with several Stokes mortars of the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery reached O.G.1 at 9.45,<sup>89</sup> emplaced them in a section of Captain Dey's trench.



and helped to consolidate it. A patrol of Lennon's men, moving out towards O.G.2, met and exchanged shots with a party of Germans,<sup>90</sup> whose presence showed that the enemy still held some part of that trench north of the windmill.

<sup>83</sup> Among the officers there were Captain Dey, who had led his men there although his right hand was blown off by a shell, and Lieutenant H. McD. Campbell (of Perth, W. Aust., and Otago, N.Z.), who, though wounded, cleared several dugouts of Germans and remained for a time to organise the defence.

<sup>84</sup> Lieut.-Col. W. P. Devonshire, D.S.O.; 27th Bn. Master tailor; of Prospect, S. Aust.; b. Victoria, 19 Sept., 1884.

<sup>85</sup> Capt. P. H. Cherry, V.C., M.C.; 26th Bn. Orchardist; of Cradoc, Tas.; b. Drysdale, Vic., 4 June, 1895. Killed in action, 27 March, 1917.

<sup>86</sup> Lieut. J. C. Murray, 7th M.G. Coy. Joiner and builder; of Townsville, Q'land; b. Townsville, 12 Dec., 1889. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

<sup>87</sup> Lieut. R. M. Berry, 25th Bn. Accountant; of Sherwood, Q'land; b. Sherwood, 27 March, 1887. Killed in action, 7 Feb., 1917.

<sup>88</sup> Capt. A. Lennon, M.C.; 25th Bn. Clerk; of Brisbane; b. Townsville, Q'land, 29 April, 1891.

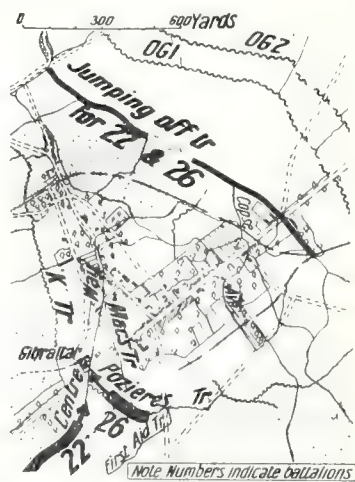
<sup>89</sup> Lieutenant W. R. Bird (of Brisbane, Q'land) had been wounded in the approach march, and Lieutenant H. P. Bateman (of East Fremantle, W. Aust.) was killed while making the dump in Walker's Avenue before the action.

<sup>90</sup> The Germans wounded Private D. R. Royan, but were driven off by his mates, Corporal J. Mitchell and Private W. G. Le Bhers. (Royan belonged to Bundaberg, Q'land; Mitchell—who having been once rejected for enlistment had changed his name from Robert Arthur Williams—to Manly, N.S.W.; and Le Bhers to Nundah, Q'land.)

The northernmost sector of the objective in the O.G. Lines was on this occasion apportioned to the 22nd Battalion of the 6th Brigade. Legge's operation order had allotted Centre Way and "K" Trench to this brigade for its approach march, and in the map attached to the instructions those trenches were marked with its name—but, apparently by some arrangement of which all memory has now faded, the 6th intended to use it only so far as Gibraltar, and at that point to switch aside into "K." This would leave the northern end of Centre Way unused, and the 7th Brigade had decided to send in by that route its northernmost battalion, the 26th, followed by part of the 7th Machine Gun Company and of the 28th Battalion. These had accordingly been ordered to move into Centre Way through Mac's Trench, which entered it beyond Gibraltar. When, however, the 22nd Battalion (6th Brigade) was making its way through Centre Way into the south-west corner of Pozières, some distance short of Gibraltar, voices were heard close ahead calling

such commands as "B company, this way!" "C Company, halt!"

At first it was thought that these orders were meant for the 22nd. But they were presently found to come from the officers and N.C.O's of a strange battalion—the 26th, of the 7th Brigade—which was filing into the trench ahead of the 22nd. The Germans were heavily barraging that end of the village, and it seems probable that the 7th Brigade in the resulting confusion had mistaken Pozières Trench for Mac's—the two being easily confused. The route of the 6th Brigade was thus blocked. The leading company of the 22nd under Captain Elmiger<sup>91</sup> managed to make its way along the trench, but the 26th then flowed in again, blocking the second company of the 22nd under Major Murdoch



<sup>91</sup> Capt. L. Elmiger, 22nd Bn. Accountant; of Magill, S. Aust.; b. Sydney, 5 Jan., 1894.

Mackay. However perilous the mistake, the rights and wrongs could not be argued at such a time. Fortunately, Mackay was a singularly determined officer. A Bendigo boy, who at the age of sixteen had passed through State and High schools to Melbourne University, and, after a brilliant course, had become a barrister at twenty-one, he was of the stuff which makes good leaders but difficult subordinates. He had on occasion opposed his battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel R. Smith,<sup>92</sup> so stubbornly that Smith had been driven to consider whether he could retain him under his command. He had kept him, however, on account of his stubborn character; if Mackay once said he would do a thing, that thing he would do. Because of Mackay's differences with his colonel, the brigadier, Gellibrand, from whom also he had stoutly differed on questions concerning courts-martial, had hesitated in confirming him in the rank of major, but, on a similar estimate of his character had made the promotion just before this battle. "I was never so thankful for any decision I have made," said Gellibrand afterwards.

In this crisis Mackay never hesitated; the 22nd must proceed to "K" Trench directly from the point then reached. He accordingly asked a junior officer, Lieutenant Alderson,<sup>93</sup> who knew the way, to lead the battalion along the main road, and thus directed the 22nd's column across the open to that trench, and then along it northwards in face of a fierce shrapnel barrage from German guns which were firing straight down it.<sup>94</sup> Men were falling to the floor of the trench, killed or wounded, and those following could seldom avoid trampling on them. Mackay was doing the work of ten, collecting disjointed parties, directing, leading, driving, until they reached the cemetery. Here he turned into a trench to the right and after climbing into the open with the greater part of the 22nd trailing behind him, hurried straight to the "jumping-off" position.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Brig.-Gen. R. Smith, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 22nd Bn., 1916; 5th Inf. Bde., 1917/18. Wool merchant; of Brighton and Geelong, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 6 Sept., 1881. Died 14 July, 1928.

<sup>93</sup> Capt. V. C. Alderson, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Musician; of Melbourne; b. Seven Oaks, Kent, Eng., 20 Dec., 1890.

<sup>94</sup> Major W. Brazenor (of Ballarat, Vic.), then commanding the 23rd, and Lieutenant F. H. Dunn (of Parkville, Vic.), his adjutant, assisted in directing the troops to follow Mackay.

<sup>95</sup> C.Q.M.S. E. R. Bregenzer (of Camperdown, Vic.), of the 22nd, standing at the opening near the cemetery, directed the men across the open as they arrived.

Meanwhile Captain Elmiger of the leading company with about sixty men had reached the "jumping-off" trench eleven minutes before the time for launching the assault. There they met Major Matthews,<sup>96</sup> second-in-command of the battalion, who had been sent to control the start.

When the barrage descended, only this handful had arrived. It was a moment for decision one way or the other, the men began to scramble out of the trench and go forward, but Matthews, considering that the advance of a mere fraction of a wave, unsupported, would result in confusion and disaster, ordered Elmiger to stay until there were enough to form a wave. The men were pulled back, but still no sign appeared of the remainder of the battalion, and for a quarter of an hour the attack proceeded without the participation of the 22nd. These were moments of tense anxiety; but at 9.30 some one shouted that Major Mackay was coming up to the rear of the trench, and this officer and his men were seen approaching. On reaching the trench, without waiting for consultation, he assumed control and, calling "Come on boys!", instantly led the troops forward. The later waves coming up on his heels, seeing Elmiger waving to them to follow on, stayed only a few minutes to pick up some formation in the assembly trench, and then hurried forward as they arrived, from 9.40 onwards.

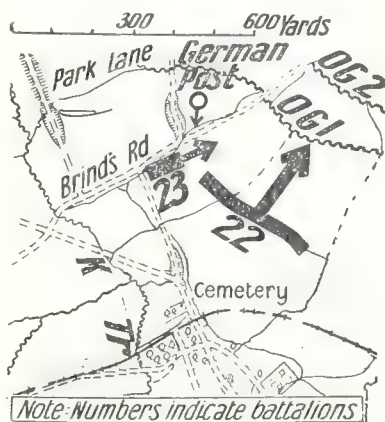
But in the interval a serious change had taken place. A German machine-gun post—apparently the one that had been unsuccessfully attacked during the days of preparation—situated about half-way to O.G.I but beyond the left flank of the advance, had been manned, and opened fire. This post was too close to be included in the flank barrage of the 25th Division's artillery, which fell, as ordered, on Park



<sup>96</sup> Maj. L. W. Matthews, D.S.O.; 22nd Bn. Engineering student; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Maryborough, Vic., 11 Feb., 1888.



Lane. There is no record of any special measure, other than the smoke barrage, having been planned for its suppression during the advance; and, as the waves of the 6th Brigade were not attacking northwards, it was not swamped, as on July 29th, by a too vigorous advance. This machine-gun was the only one brought to bear direct and at close range on any part of the Australian attack on August 4th, and its effect was deadly. The wind being contrary, the smoke-mortars which were to screen the advance from enemy observation had proved useless on this flank, and had ceased their fire. The stream of bullets was enfiling the advance. Of the leaders, the gallant Elmiger was wounded almost immediately after leaving the trench. Lieutenants Pritchard<sup>97</sup> (at Mackay's side) and Scanlon<sup>98</sup> were killed, and Lieutenant Wolff<sup>99</sup> wounded on the way across. But the wave reached O.G.I and swarmed along it. A captured German officer afterwards said that, though the attack on this flank at first appeared to be held up, the Australians presently flowed into the trench and bombed their way up it from both sides. "They were in too great number to be stopped," he added, ". . . fine strong lads." The 22nd found few Germans in the trench except dead or wounded, but a number were still in two of the deep dugouts. These shelters were bombed; one of them caught fire and burned furiously all night.<sup>100</sup> Three machine-guns were captured. The third and



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<sup>97</sup> Lieut. L. B. Pritchard, 22nd Bn. Govt. agricultural expert; of Moonee Ponds, Vic.; b. Brunswick, Vic., 1 July, 1892. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

<sup>98</sup> Lieut. H. D. Scanlon, 22nd Bn. Orchardist; of Mildura, Vic.; b. Nottingham, Eng., 2 Aug., 1887. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

<sup>99</sup> Capt. W. S. G. Wolff, 22nd Bn. Flour miller; of Essendon and St. Arnaud, Vic.; b. Sydney, 7 April, 1892.

<sup>100</sup> A few minutes after reaching O.G.I word was passed along that there were "prisoners." Lieutenant Alderson, making his way down the trench, found two Australian sentries arguing with some Germans who wished to come out of the shelter. The Australians were trying to persuade them that they were safer below, but one of the Germans, an N.C.O., made frequent use of the French word

fourth waves presently passed over O.G.1—the troops there shouting that they were “all right”—and with some difficulty recognising O.G.2 by its shredded entanglement, moved down it to right and left, killing the few Germans whom they met. The 22nd Battalion thus occupied its whole objective.

But the splendid young leader whose initiative and determination were the direct cause of this success did not live to see it. Within a few yards of O.G.1, Mackay was shot through the heart. It is not too much to say that by his conduct during a crisis of the utmost difficulty and peril the whole operation was snatched from imminent risk of complete failure. Had the 22nd Battalion failed to secure the northern sector of O.G.1, enemy machine-guns firing at close range would have cut all communication with the 7th Brigade as soon as daylight broke, and the situation of that brigade—furiously shelled, bombed from the flank, and short of supplies—would have been desperate. As it was, only a comparatively slight difficulty remained. On the extreme left, where Brind’s Road ran through and dipped into the valley leading to Courcelette, there was presently an exchange of shots and bombs with the Germans, who appeared to be occupying dugouts farther along the road. At this point intermittent fighting continued, and the precise situation was not clear, the new Australian front really coming into contact there with a switch (Bayern Riegel) on which the enemy had retreated. The flank was reinforced with part of Captain Godfrey’s<sup>101</sup> company of the 24th, which early in the night was sent into the O.G. Lines.<sup>102</sup>

The task of linking the left flank in the O.G. Lines with the old left flank near “K” Trench was duly carried out by Lieutenant Barnes<sup>103</sup> and 120 men of the 23rd with six

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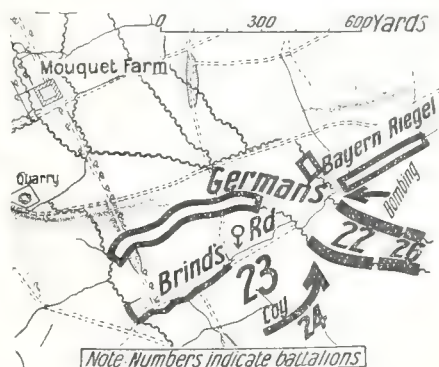
“brûler” (burn). Two minutes later a cloud of smoke rolling up the stairs made clear his meaning—the dugout was on fire. An officer and nineteen men came out, and the place burst presently into flame. Efforts to extinguish it were unsuccessful, and the troops were accordingly withdrawn for some distance either side of it.

<sup>101</sup> Capt. T. C. E. Godfrey, M.C.; 24th Bn. Accountant; of East Melbourne, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 25 April, 1891. Killed in action, 4 Oct., 1917.

<sup>102</sup> This movement was ordered by Colonel Smith upon hearing that the third and fourth waves of his own battalion would be late. They reached the O.G. Lines, however, before the 24th.

<sup>103</sup> Capt. D. Barnes, M.B.E.; 23rd Bn. Funeral director; of Ballarat, Vic., b. Learmonth, Vic., 19 April, 1890.

Lewis guns. Filing out along Brind's Road from the extreme left of the old position, they were stationed beside the road to dig in, the Lewis guns meanwhile protecting them. But the German machine-gun post that played such havoc with the 22nd sometimes rendered the work impossible. Losses were heavy, four officers and fifty men being hit, and, according to the battalion commander's report, "twice the situation seemed to warrant withdrawal." Yet the party held on through the night, reinforced near the O.G. Lines by some pioneers under Lieutenant Patterson.<sup>104</sup>



The O.G. Lines, with the exception of part of O.G.2 near the windmill, had thus been wrenched from the enemy—the fiery vigour of such leaders as Mackay and the quality of the troops having more than made up for any mistakes and miscarriages in preparation. The German narrative, as far as it is known, may be shortly set down.

The attack on August 4 had been expected, but not at that date or hour; the heavy shell-fire which had been experienced on the Courcellette front since July 30 had indeed made it obvious that an offensive was in preparation. On the night of July 31 the bombardment had cut the communications with the front line and prevented the carriage of hot food to III/162 R.I.R. north of the windmill, and its commander asked that his troops should be relieved. The tension increased, rather than relaxed, in the days which followed, the fire of Stokes mortars and the barrages of machine-gun fire laid by the Australians upon the roads and communication trenches enfiladed by them—especially those leading from Mouquet Farm southwards—adding to the strain and loss.<sup>105</sup> On August 2 a German of the 84th R.I.R. wrote:—

The Pozieres fighting can be summed up in a word, for in truth the state of affairs resembles nothing on earth. Heaps of corpses, a horrible stench, and wire lying among pieces of dead men. The 84th Regiment has lost at least two-thirds of its strength.

A company of the 162nd in the O.G. Lines, notwithstanding the excellent protection of its dugouts, lost 84 men in four days. The German airmen were barely seen, and each platoon or section of infantry was convinced that the British airmen, flying low, were

<sup>104</sup> Capt. G. B. Patterson, M.C.; 2nd Pioneer Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Adelaide, S. Aust.; b. Portsmouth, Eng., Oct., 1882.

<sup>105</sup> *History of 86th R.I.R.*, p. 145.



directing artillery-fire upon their particular dugout. One consequence was that, although the traffic of Australian troops backwards and forwards along part of "K" Trench was clearly visible to the Germans in the O.G. Lines, they would not snipe at it for fear of incurring heavier bombardment. "The best thing that can happen," wrote a German infantryman, "is to get a slight wound."

These results were not dissimilar from those produced in the Australian garrison by the prolonged bombardment. But the "special" bombardments, which puzzled the Germans, caused the strain to show itself in the false alarms already described. Yet whether the front-line troops of the 162nd opposite the Australian front really believed (as did their staff) that they had been attacked on the night of August 3, is more than doubtful. The diary of an officer in the German line under date "afternoon of August 4" says:

In front of Pozières we can see the English working. Between 5 and 7 (i.e., 4-6 p.m. English time) strongest English artillery fire and trench mortars. Thick clouds of dust make it impossible for our artillery to see the red lights fired by us.

Enemy officers subsequently said that the attack was expected to occur some morning at daylight. Company reliefs both in the 162nd and 84th R.I.R. appear to have been in progress, and the relieving troops of the 84th were approaching the windmill when the bombardment descended.

The front line of the 18th Reserve Division, opposite I Anzac, was held that night by the following troops. On its right, north of Brind's Road, was the 9th Reserve Jäger Battalion with most of the 86th R.I.R. behind it. Next to the Jäger, in the O.G. Lines from Brind's Road southwards to near the windmill, lay the III/162nd. In the O.G. Lines, from near the windmill southwards, was the II/84th R.I.R.

(which had relieved the III/84th on July 31). The Jäger, whose main line was in Park Lane, were hardly attacked except at the junction of Brind's Road with the O.G. Lines.<sup>106</sup> But the sectors held by the two other battalions were lost, with the exception of part of O.G.2 near the windmill. Here the officer at the head of the relief, already mentioned, pushing on into that trench, saw lying there three wounded Australians. Judging that a new attack was being delivered, he ordered his platoon to extend north of the road and counter-attack. In the confusion of the night, however, these troops were split up, the officer and three men being afterwards captured in a shell-hole between O.G.1 and 2, where they had endeavoured to dig in. The remainder possibly occupied during the night part of O.G.2.

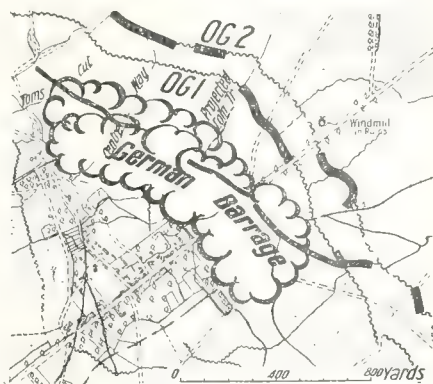
<sup>106</sup> The Jäger, however, had from the time of their entry into the line been involved in constant fighting on their right where the British had taken part of Ration Trench and eventually cut off one company. The battalion had been strengthened by the attachment of the II/86th, two of whose companies were in the front area. The combined unit was called the "Regt. Mansfeld."





The confusion of that night may be judged from the fact that the 18th Reserve Division reported that the assault had taken place at midnight<sup>107</sup> without artillery preparation. It added that the attack had made progress but had been checked by the German barrage on the windmill crest, and that an immediate counter-attack had been ordered.

The German barrage, which on the launching of the Australian attack had been laid down promptly and in tremendous density near the line of the Tramway Trench (the front line prior to the assault), caught such parts of the later waves of Australians as had been unable to reach their intended starting-points and also most of the carrying parties and pioneers. So dense were the shells that in the 7th Brigade's sector it was almost hopeless to attempt sending the parties through. After its struggle through the barrage, the 22nd Battalion had brought only four shovels to O.G.2, and in other sectors of the advanced line picks and shovels were almost equally scarce, so that the men had to work with their entrenching tools. Four field companies—the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 13th—and the 2nd and 4th Battalions of pioneers were to be responsible mainly for digging and keeping open the trenches communicating with the new line. In the 5th Brigade's sector, where No-Man's Land was narrow, these works were duly accomplished; and in the sector of the 6th Brigade, where the parties had the advantage of two old German communication trenches<sup>108</sup> to work in, they succeeded in clearing those avenues through to O.G.1 before midnight, and even in digging certain communications between O.G.1 and 2; but in the 7th Brigade's sector, where all work had to be carried out in the open under the densest of the barrage, saps could not be completed, so that the only way of reaching that part of the O.G. Lines was still overland. North of The Elbow the glow of the burning dugout in O.G.1, which could be seen all



<sup>107</sup> 1 a.m. by German time.

<sup>108</sup> Centre Way and Tom's Cut.

night, afforded a landmark towards which runners and carrying parties were constantly directed. In that sector, moreover, there were fair numbers of men for the work. South of it very little material came through,<sup>109</sup> and the line was thinly held, with wide gaps, filled to some extent by the 7th Company's machine-guns; the several groups of the garrison had been in touch, but were only vaguely aware of one another's position. Towards morning, as the result of continuous work, a number of isolated lengths of O.G.1 and, in the northern and southern sectors, several hundred yards of O.G.2 had been dug out sufficiently to afford good shelter.<sup>110</sup>

About midnight a distinct change occurred in the enemy's barrage; the fire, though it continued upon Tramway Trench, diminished in the rear areas and began to fall heavily around the O.G. Lines. Naturally enough, in the dark the new barrage was not accurate, the shells mostly missing O.G.2, although O.G.1 and the ground in its rear caught a large proportion. Nevertheless they so increased casualties that few officers were left to organise and direct the consolidation.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Lieutenant Healy afterwards stated that in the 25th Battalion's sector, so far as he knew, only one runner, Private N. D. O'Connell (of Toowoomba, Q'land), succeeded in making the double journey through the barrage.

<sup>110</sup> An order that Lewis guns should be stationed in advance of O.G.2 in shell-holes was carried out in the 5th Brigade's sector. O.G.2 itself, however, was little more than a succession of shell-holes, and in the other brigades the Lewis guns were at this stage mostly retained in O.G.2 or O.G.1, whichever was the front line.

<sup>111</sup> In the 5th and 7th Brigades on either side of the main road, the direction appears largely to have fallen on the undermentioned officers. South of the Bapaume road in the 18th, Captain H. L. Bruce commanded (after the death of Kirke) in O.G.1. In O.G.2 Captain R. M. Sadler and Lieutenant J. N. Doyle (of Sydney) were hit soon after the capture of the trench. Lieutenant R. McG. Fitzgerald (of Melbourne) was killed while encouraging his men in the subsequent bombardment, and Lieutenant E. P. Allison (of Broken Hill, N.S.W.) was killed about the same time. Lieutenant N. H. Hobbs (of Gosford, N.S.W.) took charge of the 18th in the forward trench until Lieutenant C. G. Walklate (of Roseville, N.S.W.) was sent up at about midnight. In Captain Devonshire's sector north of the road, Sergeant C. G. Thomson undertook a leading part in the direction until he collapsed through loss of blood; and among others Private F. Hemsley (of Brentwood, S. Aust.), who was killed during the night, rendered conspicuous assistance.

Farther north, in the 25th, Capt. Boys and Lieut. Stuart had been killed, and Capt. H. Cross (of Brisbane) seriously wounded. The remaining company commander, Lieutenant F. R. Corney (of Melbourne), though wounded in the hand, continued as long as he could to supervise the work in O.G.1. Eventually the whole responsibility fell upon Lieutenant Healy, who, early on August 5, discovered that there was no officer of the battalion in O.G.2. Lieutenant T. Hobgen (of Roma and Cloncurry district, Q'land) of the battalion transport was sent up, but was soon wounded. On hearing of this, Healy himself took over the front line, leaving Company Sergeant-Major C. G. C. Thompson (of Lakemba, N.S.W.) in charge of the battalion sector of O.G.1. Healy was assisted by Sergeants W. Harrison, Cameron, F. M. Mortyn, J. B. Gordon, and others. In the morning he found touch on his northern flank with Captain G. Bond (of Hobart) of the 26th. In that battalion's sector Captains F. B. Caless (of Ayr, Q'land) and R. J.

West of the windmill in the sector commanded by Captain Devonshire of the 27th, N.C.O's and even privates were eventually doing officers' work. The machine-guns and trench-mortars were still officered; the company commanders of the 25th Battalion north of The Elbow were all killed or wounded, and the command of the battalion in both lines eventually fell upon the only officer remaining there, Lieutenant Healy, and upon his N.C.O's. The position of the 26th was almost the same. In the 22nd, to replace officers lost during the preceding days, eleven N.C.O's had been commissioned a few hours before the battle. As invariably happened in such cases in the A.I.F., these fine men felt bound to prove their courage and devotion to their old comrades, with the result that three were killed and six wounded—two of them mortally—before the night was out.<sup>112</sup> Despite these and other losses, the 22nd was still well officered in O.G.2, where Captain Curnow,<sup>113</sup> an admired leader, was in charge with three juniors.<sup>114</sup>

At midnight the barrage protecting the Australians was temporarily lifted in order to permit of scouting by patrols.<sup>115</sup> Small reconnaissances were made, then or later, on most parts of the front, though loss of officers and the confusion of

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Thompson (of Mackay, Q'land) were killed, and the work fell largely on the N.C.O's, especially Sergeants A. Single (of Mudgee, N.S.W.) and C. A. Stapleton (of Charters Towers, Q'land), and upon Lieutenant S. J. Morgan (of Ipswich, Q'land), the signalling officer.

<sup>112</sup> Of this eleven, the Lewis gun officer, Lieutenant H. D. Scanlon, was killed and Lieutenants C. Kennett (of South Melbourne, Vic.) and I. C. Handasyde (of Camberwell, Vic.) were both wounded, the former mortally, in crossing No-Man's Land; Lieutenant H. R. Thomas (of Albert Park, Vic.), until he too was killed, and Lieutenant R. Blanchard (of Brighton, Vic.) took charge of the battalion's line in O.G.1. Lieutenant R. M. Condon (of Prahran, Vic.) was killed after taking out a patrol. (His father, J. D. Condon, a private in the 46th Battalion, A.I.F., took part in this battle, and was subsequently killed at Messines.) Lieutenants A. W. Yates (of Ballarat, Vic.), F. G. Kellaway (of Northcote, Vic.), and S. Scammell (of Elsternwick, Vic.) were wounded, the first-named mortally, soon after reaching O.G.2. Lieutenant Scammell was subsequently killed at Bullecourt, and Lieutenants Kellaway and Blanchard at Ypres. The only survivors, Lieutenants Handasyde and H. J. King (of Daylesford, Vic.), were invalided to Australia through wounds, the former after this fight, the latter in 1918.

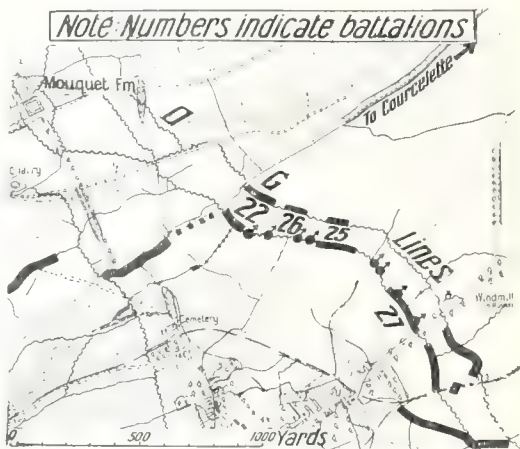
<sup>113</sup> Capt. H. F. Curnow, 22nd Bn. Public servant; of Melbourne and Bendigo, Vic.; b. Kangaroo Flat, Vic., 9 Jan., 1893. Killed in action, 5 Aug., 1916.

<sup>114</sup> Lieutenants H. T. Lanyon (of Shepparton, Vic.), H. C. Rodda (of Hawthorn, Vic.), and E. B. McKay (of Melbourne). Major Matthews, on hearing that Major M. N. Mackay and Captain Elmiger had been hit, assumed the command in O.G.1.

<sup>115</sup> East of O.G.2 the barrage was gradually advanced 500 yards for this purpose, and afterwards gradually brought back.

the night prevented the businesslike return of collated reports. East of the O.G. Lines—except in the case, already mentioned, of the trench-mortar men near the windmill—the scouts found the area close in front of the O.G. Lines to be clear of the enemy. The enemy

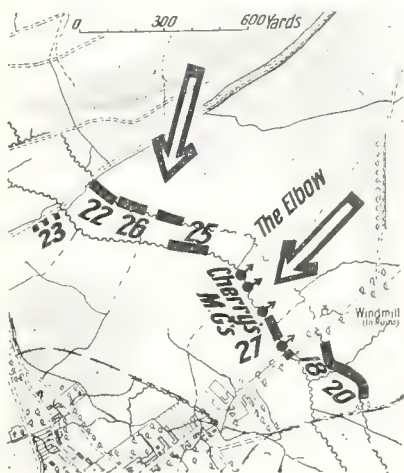
had, indeed, received a staggering blow, and it is probable that, except for certain reserves in Brind's Road, this part of the front was virtually clear as far as Courcelette. Over the reverse slope of the ridge, the Australians working in O.G.2 could see the dark shapes of the trees around that



village and the naked flashes of a German battery a mile to the north-east. Shortly before midnight there were seen at intervals, over the brow of the hill Courcelette way, five great explosions, in which dark objects were flung hundreds of feet into the air. Some enemy battery, it was conjectured, was destroying its ammunition in fear of a deeper advance. "Are you in Courcelette?" was the first question asked by a young German officer when brought as a prisoner to brigade headquarters. But the British plans did not propose any present advance in that direction; nor, on the front of a single division, would it have been advisable. The next objective lay northwards from the 6th Brigade's flank, and reports as to whether the enemy in that direction were weak (as General Gough supposed) and a rapid—perhaps immediate—advance possible were eagerly awaited. From that direction, however, no reports arrived. Accordingly the brigadier, Gellibrand, taking Plant, his brigade-major, himself went up at 2.5 a.m. through the barrage to Tramway Trench. He found that patrols had been sent out but had met with bombs and machine-gun fire, and that the confused but stubborn fighting then occurring on the northern front put out of the question any immediate attempt to press northwards.



Such was the position when at dawn—about 4 o'clock<sup>116</sup>—on Saturday, August 5th, the occupants of the posts north of The Elbow in O.G.2, and the sentries of the machine-gun detachments in O.G.1 south of it, observed an extended line of figures coming up over the brow of the hill towards the windmill. Farther north, at the same time, the 26th and 22nd perceived Germans coming up from the valley down which Brind's Road dipped. The southern wing of the attack was instantly met by the fire of Lieutenant Cherry's machine-guns, as well as by that of the 25th and 27th, and



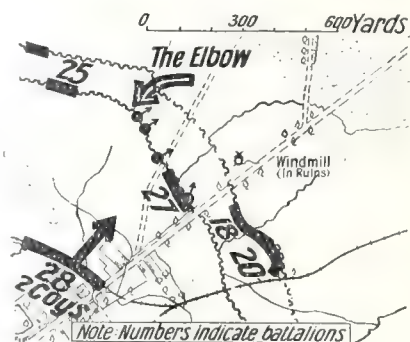
the Germans, who were bravely led by an officer waving a revolver, not yet recognising the direction from which the fire came, began to "bunch," offering an ideal target to the machine-guns. After losing heavily they dropped into shell-holes, but continued to advance by rushes, and, though firing had become general, pressed on to the unoccupied part of O.G.2 and thence along an old communication trench towards O.G.1, perilously close on the flank of Cherry's guns. Chance had brought them to the gap between the 27th and 25th, where they were four to one, but faced by a handful of fine men under a particularly dashing officer. On the night of July 28th Cherry had made the repulse of the infantry the occasion for advancing his guns until they nearly came to serious trouble. The true opportunity for his battery had now arrived. The enemy was pressing a section of O.G.1 held only by a machine-gun's crew and two men of the 27th, and was actually bombing the gun. Its operator, Lance-Corporal Hunter,<sup>117</sup> though wounded in the hand by one of these bombs, continued to fire until another burst

<sup>116</sup> "Summer" time. The true time was 3 a.m.

<sup>117</sup> Lieut. H. O. C. Hunter, M.M.; 7th M.G. Coy. Farmer; of Lismore, N.S.W.; b. London, England, 1894.

smashed the gun.<sup>118</sup> Cherry, however, thwarted the move by shifting another gun to a position from which it caught these Germans from the flank and rear, and the enemy thrust in this quarter came to a stop.

Meanwhile news of the attack had reached the headquarters of the 25th at Tramway Trench. Major Leane, the commander of the 28th, being present and having three companies in that trench as supports, left the dugout and, seeing fighting in progress on the horizon, at once ordered Captain Foss<sup>119</sup> to lead two companies forward. Foss advanced immediately with his men extended, but the enemy had by that time sunk into shell-holes, where he was being sniped by the infantry and bombed by guns of the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery. With the arrival of Foss the Germans were far outnumbered, and those near O.G.1, seeing the advance, at once surrendered.<sup>120</sup>



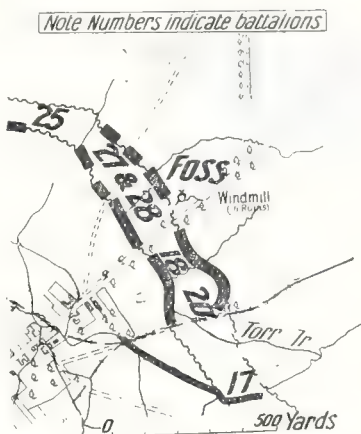
Finding that O.G.2 near the windmill had not yet been occupied, Foss led forward in that direction a small party of the 27th and 28th. Farther north also, observing that some of the defeated Germans were still occupying that trench or shell-holes near it, several Australian officers independently

<sup>118</sup> Shortage of ammunition proved a difficulty, but Cherry had filled German machine-gun belts with ammunition taken from the wounded, and Sergeant E. F. Armit (of Townsville, Q'land) used these with success. Cherry afterwards reported that Corporal L. J. Felstead's had been the first gun to open, and that Privates A. J. Sells (of Charleville, Q'land) and J. L. Bowman (of Brisbane), after being half-buried, worked their gun until they were killed.

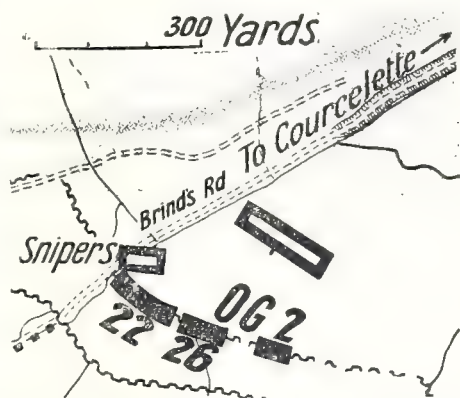
<sup>119</sup> The same who had led the first Australian trench raid at Armentières.

<sup>120</sup> The fight was marked by an incident of a sort that was not frequent in this war. Cherry and an officer who was leading the German attack in that neighbourhood were shooting at one another from neighbouring shell-holes, each endeavouring to dodge the other's shots. It happened that they rose together and fired simultaneously, the German hitting Cherry's helmet, but being mortally wounded by him. The Australian presently went over to his dying opponent; as he bent down, the German took some letters from his pockets, and in good English asked him to promise that, after submitting the letters to the censor, he would post them. On receiving this promise, the German handed them over, saying as he did so: "And so it ends."

led out parties from O.G.1 to attack them,<sup>121</sup> whereupon a considerable number surrendered.<sup>122</sup> Foss then stationed a small mixed post with a Lewis gun in O.G.2 near the windmill, and both he and Lieutenant King<sup>123</sup> sent back to battalion headquarters asking for more men to do the necessary digging. The capture of O.G.2 had thus been completed, but south of The Elbow it was occupied only lightly by mixed posts of the 27th and 28th.



Meanwhile a northern wing of the counter-attack had directed itself against the 22nd and 26th Battalions, about 150 Germans coming up in an extended line from the valley in front of Courcellette. The men of those battalions scrambled on to the parapet—no firestep having been made and the trench being now deep—and fired at them. Standing thus, their attention fixed on the advancing line, the troops on the left were not at first aware that they were being sniped with deadly effect by a handful of Germans lying in shell-holes about forty yards in advance of O.G.2 where Brind's Road ran through. It happened that Captain Curnow saw a well-known man of his



<sup>121</sup> Lieutenant King of the 28th, who had been sent forward at the same time as Foss, but some distance to the north of the latter, led one party. Capt. S. H. Adams of the 4th Pioneers, who, with such of his own men and of the infantry as were round him, had organised the defence of part of the O.G. Lines, led another small party.

<sup>122</sup> A number of these prisoners, when being sent to the rear, were unfortunately fired on and killed—according to one account, by their own artillery, according to another, by Australians who had mistaken the movement for a counter-attack.

<sup>123</sup> Capt. H. C. King, M.C.; 28th Bn. Warehouseman; of Claremont, W. Aust.; b. Guildford, W. Aust., Oct., 1895. Died of wounds, 7 April, 1918.

company, Private Vienna,<sup>124</sup> formerly a football supporter of Geelong, killed by one of these snipers. Exclaiming "I'll get the chap who did that," and drawing his revolver on the German, this beloved leader too was shot dead. The incident added to the fury of the fight. Under the fire poured upon them the Germans broke when 200 yards away, and rushed back towards Courcelette. Shortly afterwards they appeared to be led forward again, but quickly sank into shell-holes, and the only movement subsequently seen in this quarter was that of individual men occasionally crawling about the crater-field. But the Germans near Brind's Road were within bombing range and were not so easily defeated. Their grenades scattered some Victorians digging near the flank; but a private of the 22nd, named O'Neill,<sup>125</sup> collected a party to bomb them back. Finding that the enemy nest was farther than they themselves could throw, the men raised a call for "Omeo," a youngster—Lance-Corporal Weston<sup>126</sup>—from the township of that name in Victoria, and a thrower of repute. He came along, glanced at the enemy position, decided that he could not reach it from the trench, and jumped upon the parados. He was leaning back to hurl his grenade when a sniper's bullet hit him in the face, knocking out an eye. Still clutching the live bomb, with the eye hanging on his cheek, he fell forward into the trench among half-a-dozen men. "For God's sake, George, take this bomb," he said to O'Neill. "The pin's out!" He then fainted, but not before O'Neill had seized the missile and hurled it safely clear of the trench.

According to German accounts, this counter-attack would seem to have been preceded by an earlier effort made by the support company of the III/162nd. This attempt appears to have faded before it came under the observation of the Australians, unless it included the bombing attacks made during the night near Brind's Road against the left of the 22nd Battalion. Two companies of the II/162nd, lying at Courcelette in support of the III Battalion, were not immediately sent forward; and it was these, together with two of the I/162nd—hurriedly brought up from Warlencourt—which made the counter-attack at dawn on August 5. They may have been supported by some action on the part of the 9th Jäger Reserve Battalion and

<sup>124</sup> Pte. E. Vienna (No. 268; 22nd Bn.). Labourer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Geelong, 1875. Killed in action, 5 Aug., 1916.

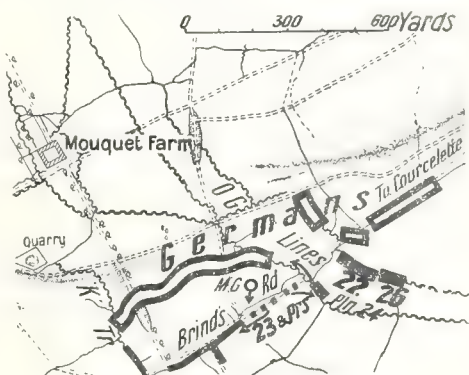
<sup>125</sup> L/Cpl. G. J. O'Neill, D.C.M. (No. 223; 22nd Bn.). Tally clerk; of Kyneton, Vic.; b. Cork, Ireland, 14 Jan., 1883.

<sup>126</sup> L/Cpl. N. D. Weston, D.C.M. (No. 1635; 22nd Bn.). Bushman and stockrider; of Omeo, Vic.; b. Omeo, 17 Nov., 1896.



the attached troops of the II/86th R.I.R. to the north, and of the 84th to the south. German records state that this counter-attack was preceded by bombardment but failed entirely and with severe loss.

Nevertheless at this stage the situation on the left was a rather anxious one for the Australians. The 23rd and Pioneers forming the flank along Brind's Road found machine-gun fire enfilading their new trench and were forced to withdraw, although they covered the abandoned sap with two Lewis guns.<sup>127</sup>



An appeal was sent to the commander of the 22nd to secure the flank. He had at dawn sent back the reinforcing troops of the 24th, in order to avoid overcrowding the O.G. Lines; but they were recalled at this stage in order to secure the left, a platoon under Lieutenant Christian<sup>128</sup> being sent northwards along O.G.I., in which it established itself at some distance north of Brind's Road. As the offensive was almost immediately to turn northwards, information—both as to the situation of the Australians holding this flank and as to the strength of the enemy facing them—was urgently needed, but was not to hand. Accordingly later in the day Captain Nicholas,<sup>129</sup> a young officer of the 24th, made his way along Brind's Road with Lieutenant Hughes,<sup>130</sup> securing touch with the troops in O.G.I. When returning, Nicholas not only located the German machine-gun post that had caused so much trouble on this flank, but captured the German party and came in with their gun on his shoulder. "Just as well," he said, "to make

<sup>127</sup> A trench-mortar under Corporal B. H. Cavanagh (of Brimpaen district, Vic.) also covered this flank. Its position was known to be a dangerous one, but Cavanagh, who applied for the task, kept the gun in action after all his team had been hit, until he himself was seriously wounded.

<sup>128</sup> Lieut. N. R. Christian, 24th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Prahran, Vic., 1 July, 1891.

<sup>129</sup> Major G. M. Nicholas, D.S.O.; 24th Bn. School teacher; of Melbourne and Trafalgar, Vic.; b. Coleraine, Vic., 2 March, 1887. Killed in action, 14 Nov., 1916.

<sup>130</sup> Lieut. A. Hughes, M.C.; 22nd Bn. School teacher; of Broomfield and Ballarat, Vic.; b. Allendale, Vic., 25 Oct., 1885.

certain that it won't be used again." The line of the road was then occupied without difficulty and the flank rendered secure.<sup>131</sup>

On the left of the Australians the 12th Division had during the night attacked the uncaptured part of Fifth Avenue<sup>132</sup> and completed its seizure. During this operation the 7th Royal Sussex, assaulting the junction of Fifth Avenue and "K" Trench, suffered losses from machine-gun fire, especially among the junior officers, from a post beyond, and were held up; but the junction was subsequently won by bombing. A number of Germans were found to have been cut off in the open south of this trench, and, when the shell-holes there were bombed, 150 surrendered. On the other flank of the Australians, although the attack on Torr Trench had failed, touch was obtained along O.G.2 with the British position in that trench,<sup>133</sup> and the 18th Battalion found contact with the 7th Brigade at the windmill,<sup>134</sup> thus completing the attainment of the 2nd Division's objective.



<sup>131</sup> For some days neither Germans nor Australians appear to have been aware of the precise position at the extreme north-eastern corner of the new Australian position. Both front lines were now broken there—the 9th Jäger having no touch with the 162nd. Part of the 162nd was relieved by the Jäger immediately after the attack.

<sup>132</sup> Or "Ration Trench." The 7th Royal Sussex and 9th Royal Fusiliers attacked frontally, while the 8th Royal Fusiliers bombed up from the left.

<sup>133</sup> Lieut. J. G. Burnell (of Melbourne and Castlemaine, Vic.) of the engineers crawled southwards down the empty trench from the flank of the 20th Battalion.

<sup>134</sup> According to one account, Captain Bruce and Lieutenant Hobbs of the 18th explored the old dugouts at the windmill.

## CHAPTER XX

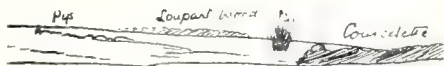
### THE LAST COUNTER-ATTACK ON POZIÈRES HEIGHTS

THE Pozières heights had been won, and a position of much importance gained. Gough congratulated the 2nd Division upon having "inflicted a severe defeat on the enemy and secured us most valuable ground." Haig, wisely cautious, telegraphed that the success was of "very considerable importance and opens the way to further equally valuable successes . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The view of the German staff may be inferred from a subsequently captured extract from an order of General von Below, commanding the First German Army:

At any price Hill 60<sup>2</sup> (the Pozières Plateau) must be recovered, for if it were to remain in the hands of the British it would give them an important advantage. Attacks will be made by successive waves 80 yards apart. Troops which first reach the Plateau must hold on until reinforced, whatever their losses. Any officer or man who fails to resist to the death on the ground won will be immediately courtmartialled.

From their new posts in or in front of O.G.2 the Australians had found themselves at day-break looking out across the crater-field at the leafy tree-tops and broken roofs of Courcellette, its ground line, however, being hidden by the curve of the hill-crest. Beyond them were the gentle slopes of a valley winding north-eastwards towards Pys and the green heights crowned by Loupart Wood, near Bapaume; to the north, distant view was prevented by a shoulder of the Pozières ridge, which just screened Mouquet Farm also. On the slopes of this shoulder,



*From a sketch looking N.E. from O.G.2.*

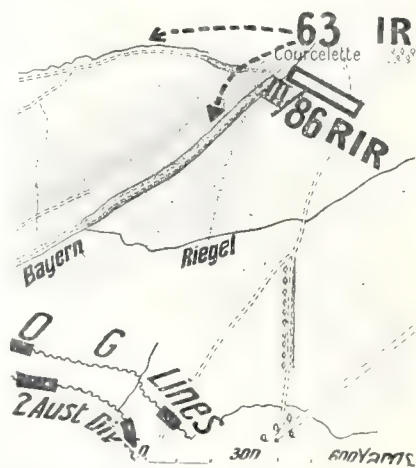
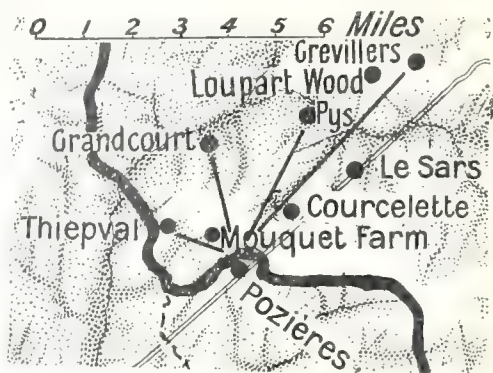
<sup>1</sup> "To be obtained by similar careful methods of preparation, and gallantry and thoroughness in execution."

<sup>2</sup> This is almost certainly a mistake in the English translation for "Hill 160" or "161," the name by which the Germans knew the Pozières heights. As the order was captured during the counter-attack of August 7 there is no doubt as to its intention.

and a mile to the north-east, the crew of a German battery could be seen serving their guns unconscious of the fact that their position now lay open to view. The first sight of this landscape of green fields, contrasting with the flayed battle-field in rear of the line, brought encouragement to the troops as a view over the promised land.<sup>3</sup>

Towards Courcelette the slope appeared to be unoccupied except by German stretcher-parties, who during this day and the next moved constantly over the open, generally without interference from the Australians who watched them. To the north the enemy was much closer, but little was known as to his strength.

It is now known from German sources that on the morning of August 5 no fresh local reserves were left near Courcelette, though the 63rd Regiment (reserve of the Army Corps) was at Ligny-Thilloy. "If the enemy's attack had continued," writes Colonel von Rettburg of the 162nd, "Courcelette would have been lost." All available units nearer the front were brought up and set to dig across the gap that had been torn in the German line. One of these, the much-tried III/86th R.I.R., was hurried for this purpose from Pys to Courcelette. As its companies emerged from the latter village they learnt that there was only a thin line of their own side—the remnant of several mixed units—in front of them. Other trench-lines, of course, existed to their rear—the "Below Stellung" was under construction near the bottom of the next valley near Le Sars, the "Gallwitz Line" farther back in the same valley near Warlencourt, and a fourth system just beginning to appear at Loupart Wood on the heights beyond. But in front of them was no complete trench-line, and although during the last fortnight the Germans had endeavoured to establish behind O.G.I and 2 a line of defences (known temporarily as the "third" line of



<sup>3</sup> Plate 52 reproduces a photograph taken from the O.G. Lines.



the front system), this work was unfinished and its shallow damaged lengths were at present unoccupied. The line held appears to have been much closer to Courcellette. Behind it the III/86th were set to dig a second line, close to the west of the village, their orders being that until the coming night they must be responsible for preventing any further advance by the British. The trench recently dug along Brind's Road towards Courcellette (known as the "Bayern Riegel")<sup>4</sup> served for a moment as the third line. The German batteries around Courcellette were reported about this time to be short of ammunition. Later in the day the broken II/162nd and III/162nd were temporarily reorganised at Warlencourt as a single battalion, and the I/162nd reconstituted in the Bayern Trench with three companies. The 63rd I.R., brought up from Corps reserve, occupied with its II and III Battalions the Bayern and Fabeck Trenches respectively. North of Pozières the II/157th relieved the 9th Reserve Jäger. Ammunition was brought up for the artillery. The crisis had passed, and the German leaders were able to turn their thoughts to the preparation of a deliberate counter-attack.

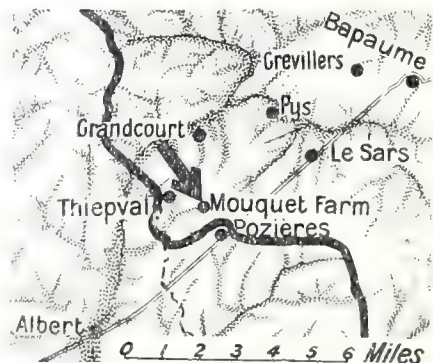
Early on August 5th Birdwood visited Legge and arranged that, in accordance with Gough's desire, the northward attack should be launched that night.<sup>5</sup> The order was immediately passed to the brigades, the intention being that the 6th (Gellibrand) should undertake the capture of the next trench northwards (Park Lane, the German "Gierich Weg"). But after two great night-attacks and ten days of dreadful bombardment, the limits of the 2nd Division's powers had been reached. Already for some hours the whole length of the new front line had been under the new systematic bombardment with which the enemy was obviously preparing his next counter-attack; and at 10 o'clock Holmes had at last asked for the relief of his brigade: his men, he said, could not support further strain. Eleven days of this battle had brought an end even to their extraordinary capacity for endurance. The bombardment now falling on the whole line was becoming more accurate as the enemy's batteries, to which some of large calibre seemed to have been added, registered upon the new front-lines. Of these, O.G.2 was visible to the enemy from the front and flank, and O.G.1 from the left rear, Thiepval way.

The enemy's artillery now paid such close attention to this hill-crest that batteries near the Thiepval ridge began for the first time to "snipe" even at solitary men making their way across the crater-field in rear of the lines. Moreover, the

<sup>4</sup> "Bavarian Switch"—possibly it had been dug by Bavarian troops as a switch after one of the previous British offensives.

<sup>5</sup> Gough's formal order for this attack did not arrive until 11.30 a.m.

series of Australian thrusts had transformed the front from a concavity into a salient, upon which the German artillery could now fire from three sides. The "Thiepval" field-guns<sup>6</sup> appeared to command certain parts of the O.G. lines from the rear. But a bombardment by heavy howitzers was now commencing which imposed a heavier strain. These first registered carefully upon their allotted trenches and, during the hours which followed, methodically placed their shells along them, from one flank to the other; then to the rear along a communication trench; then down



*Direction of fire from "Thiepval."*

the support line to the other flank, and thence back to the front line.<sup>7</sup> In some sectors two howitzers seemed to work in opposite directions, their lines of fire crossing, parting, and then returning to cross again. The lengths of O.G.1 re-excavated during the night were gradually crushed in; but most of the garrison of that trench found shelter in dugouts, whereas in O.G.2 there was no such shelter and the posts were under clearer observation. In that trench few officers now survived,<sup>8</sup> and the Lewis guns were being gradually destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

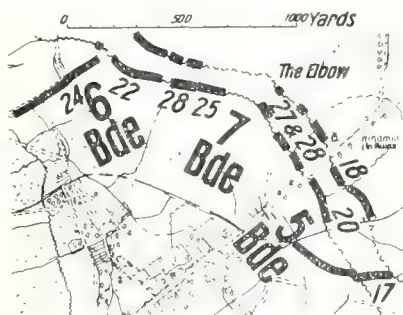
<sup>6</sup> They were probably between Grandcourt and Thiepval, but were always given this name by the Australians because their shells appeared to arrive from the left rear—the direction of Thiepval.

<sup>7</sup> The commander of the Anzac "heavies" asked at noon whether their fire, which had been continued since the last night's operations, was still required. General Paton replied that the infantry were suffering severely and the efforts of counter-batteries were still required. The situation of men of the infantry under the German fire was afterwards described by a man of the 20th as being "like waiting for your turn at a bar." Each man was certain to be served in due course as the shells came along the line.

<sup>8</sup> It has been mentioned (p. 691) that at dawn the 22nd Battalion in O.G.2 was well officered. Since then, however, Lieutenant McKay had been mortally wounded over the eye by a bomb and was out of action, although he had insisted upon remaining at the front as long as he could; Lieutenant Lanyon had been temporarily buried by a shell, leaving Lieutenant Rodda alone in charge. Lieutenant E. G. Hogarth (of North Carlton, Vic.) was sent up to assist him, but was wounded almost immediately. Lieutenant A. Skene-Smith (of the Philippine Islands and Melbourne) was eventually sent up to afford Lanyon and Rodda relief. He was wounded later.

<sup>9</sup> In the 22nd's sector, for example, the Lewis gun on the extreme left was blown up. That from the right of the sector was then sent thither, with one man, Private J. G. Lyal (of Launceston, Tas.), the sole survivor of its crew. Lyal was almost immediately killed and the gun destroyed. The gun in the centre of the sector, though it had been blown up and its crew killed or wounded, remained usable, and was manned by riflemen.

This bombardment had of course been anticipated, and, to reduce losses, it had been ordered that the garrison of the forward area must be thinned out before dawn by the withdrawal of all troops above the minimum required for defending the captured position. On August 5th reminders of this order were sent by every staff, from that of the army downwards. The line of the 6th Brigade, which through the swerving of the attack to the left was the most strongly manned, had been thinned by the withdrawal of the reinforcing troops of the 24th Battalion;<sup>10</sup> but the posts of the 7th Brigade were already widely extended with large gaps between. Officers who were sent round the line<sup>11</sup> found some difficulty even in locating certain of the scattered posts north of The Elbow, where O.G.2 was held only for a short distance; south of it the line was but thinly held by the scattered 27th, reinforced by three widely separated groups of the 28th under Lieutenants King and Brown<sup>12</sup> and Captain Foss. The wounded, it is true, lay about thickly, the stretcher-bearers, in spite of the increase in their numbers, being either themselves casualties or approaching exhaustion. The dugouts



and communication trenches were consequently clogged with wounded, whom their comrades (and, in the case of the 22nd Battalion, a German red-cross man who volunteered for the work) were tending as best they could. An officer of the 27th, after visiting the O.G. Lines, reported that only three officers and 200 men of that battalion were left. Foss and King of the 28th had asked for more men.<sup>13</sup> To withdraw the reinforcing companies of the 28th

<sup>10</sup> Some of these, however, had to be brought back almost at once to reinforce the left (*see p. 697*).

<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant Morgan, signalling officer of the 26th, and Captain J. A. Robinson, its adjutant.

<sup>12</sup> Major A. Brown, D.S.O., M.C.; 28th Bn. Station overseer; of Coonabarabran, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, Sept., 1894.

<sup>13</sup> A few had been despatched under Lieutenant Phillipps. Almost the whole battalion had by then been sent forward.

therefore appeared too dangerous, and, although the order to thin the line if circumstances permitted was thrice received from General Paton, Lieutenant-Colonel Leane replied that the situation did not allow of it.<sup>14</sup> Shortly before midday, however, there came through a fourth order, that the front lines must be held during the day with a minimum of troops with Lewis guns. Leane therefore instructed all companies of the 28th to withdraw to Pozières, and at 12.30 they began to do so. The retirement was a difficult one, the men having to creep back from O.G.2, necessarily leaving the wounded,<sup>15</sup> and then make their way over the open through the barrage to Tramway Trench. Captain Foss, the leader of the 28th in the front line, was mortally wounded; but by 4 o'clock the withdrawal was complete.

At that hour corps headquarters was startled by a message that, owing to the bombardment and lack of shelter, the 27th

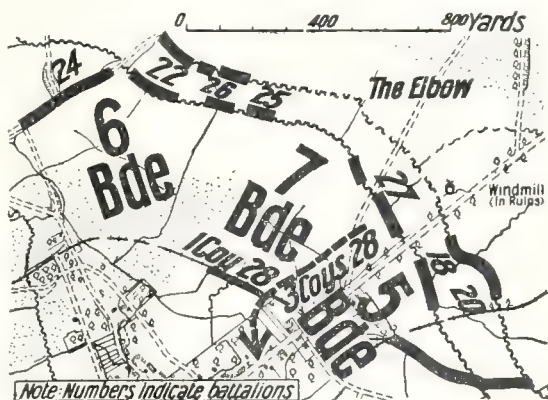
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<sup>14</sup> The reply from the 27th was the same—that the 27th and 28th combined were insufficient for the security of the line.

<sup>15</sup> Though General Legge had specially increased the number of stretcher-bearers in each battalion to 24, the organisation for evacuation failed during this stage of the battle, mainly because the distance between the front line and the regimental aid-posts—still south of Pozières, a mile back—was too great for their powers; yet no adequate shelter from such bombardments as those of Pozières was at this time available nearer the front. From the aid-posts the wounded were cleared by bearers of the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 12th Field Ambulances, grouped under control of the 5th Field Ambulance, which had relieved the 3rd (and the bearers of the 1st and 2nd) at Bécourt Château. The evacuation of the seriously wounded from Bécourt by motor-ambulance to the casualty clearing-stations at Warloy, Puchevillers, and elsewhere, and of the "walking" wounded mainly by returning lorries to Vadencourt and elsewhere, worked almost without hitch. In the next period, on August 7 and 8, the aid-posts were pushed forward by the A.D.M.S. of the 4th Division (Colonel G. W. Barber) to dugouts at the cemetery and Tramway Trench, though the advanced dressing-stations still remained at Casualty Corner and by the Chalk Pit Road. During this period the 12th Field Ambulance at Bécourt controlled the evacuation, having also the bearers of the 4th, 13th, and (as reserve, in emergency) 2nd Field Ambulances. The carriage of wounded through the barrages was still too heavy for the regimental bearers, especially from the northern front near Mouquet Farm. From August 9 onwards horse-ambulances, previously used only as far as the head of Sausage Gully, were sent to Casualty Corner. When the 1st Division relieved the 4th (August 16), the 1st Field Ambulance became responsible at Bécourt, having also the bearers of the 2nd, 3rd, and (in reserve) 6th Field Ambulances. A coffee stall of the Comforts Fund, established at the corner of Bécourt Wood near the track of the "walking" wounded, became about this time a permanent institution. On August 22, when the 2nd Division began to return, the 7th Field Ambulance, with the bearers of the 5th and 6th attached, took over the control. The tramway, by then extended to the Chalk Pit, afforded an additional means for evacuation of the "walking" wounded. On the 28th, when the 4th Division came back, the 13th Field Ambulance took charge, having also the bearers of the 12th and 4th. The routes for evacuation were at that stage modified, motor-ambulances working up the Bapaume road as far as the outskirts of Pozières, and the tramway having been extended almost to the cemetery. The chief advanced dressing-station was removed from Bécourt to the school buildings in Albert. See also pp. 518 and 670.



Battalion was abandoning O.G.2 and falling back on O.G.1. About the same time General Paton reported that the available strength of the 28th Battalion had been reduced to 130; that of the 25th, apart from battalion headquarters, was given as one officer and 29 men; and the 26th was not expected to number more than 200.<sup>16</sup> An obvious explanation of the falling back from O.G.2 appears to be that, as the 28th comprised almost the entire garrison of that trench when the order for it to withdraw arrived, the handful of 27th who were mingled with it naturally came back at the same time. This was not realised at headquarters; but it had already become obvious that part of the 7th Brigade must be at once



relieved,<sup>17</sup> and that the 6th Brigade was in no condition to undertake another important attack. Paton's message was passed on to Gough to indicate the condition of the troops; Birdwood had already informed the army commander that the northward attack could not be commenced that night, fresh troops being necessary for the task.<sup>18</sup> The 4th Division must therefore be put in. Its 12th Brigade (Brigadier-General Glasfurd) had already been ordered to undertake the immediate relief of the 5th and of part of the 7th; the 4th (Brigadier-General Brand), which, being the veteran formation, would undertake the northward thrust, was now ordered to relieve the 6th, with a view to an attack on the

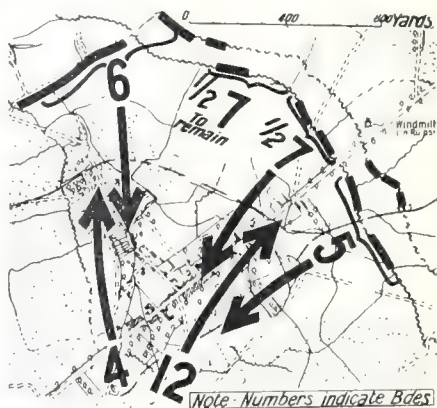
<sup>16</sup> The strength of the 27th was not given, but some hours later it was reported as 100 with only one Lewis gun.

<sup>17</sup> Paton very staunchly undertook to continue holding reduced frontage.

<sup>18</sup> Birdwood had informed Gough of this decision at 2.37 p.m. He indicated, however, that two minor attacks would be made that night on the flanks. Of these, one was apparently the seizure by the 24th Battalion of the German machine-gun post north of Brind's—which, however, was presently found to have been taken by Captain Nicholas. The other was the clearing of Torr Trench in conjunction with the British.

following night. Between these two the 7th Brigade, though relieved of half its front, must hold the O.G. Lines north of The Elbow for another night.

The 4th Division, which for some days had been on or near the edge of the battlefield, comprised two new brigades and one old one. These did not, however, greatly differ from one another in their percentage (probably 25 to 30) of veteran troops. While an Australian division was normally composed of one brigade each from the two



populous States—Victoria and New South Wales—and a third formed with battalions from all the “outer” States, the 4th Division was formed mainly of troops from the “outer” States.<sup>19</sup> It is true that the 4th and 12th Brigades each contained a battalion from New South Wales and one from Victoria; but the less populous States were far more strongly represented in this division than in any other: it included, for example, three battalions from Western Australia and the best part of four from Queensland. It ultimately achieved a reputation for hard fighting and for the possession, perhaps, of the least polish but the most numerous war-scars. As yet, however, it had had only a few days’ experience of the trenches on the Western Front, the 12th and 13th Brigades not yet having undertaken even a trench-raid. On the other hand, its staff was fairly experienced, and its commander, the firm, sallow, sardonic, but understanding Anglo-Indian, H. V. Cox, was peculiarly well suited to its temperament. Its march from the back area to the Somme front had been a chequered performance. The progress of the 12th Brigade to Rubempré and Herrissart, for example, is described in the brigade diary as “deplorable.” Though the

<sup>19</sup> Namely, the 4th Bde. (all States), its “daughter” the 12th (all States), and the 13th, “daughter” of the 3rd (all States except New South Wales and Victoria).

day was "cloudy and not unusually hot," in the 48th Battalion (Western Australia) 75 men fell out; in the 45th (New South Wales) 113; in the 47th (mainly Queensland) 227; and in the 46th (Victoria) 392. The brigadier, Glasfurd, told his officers that, if the precautions "laid down time after time" were not observed, he must remove some of the leaders for incompetency. "The divisional commander," notes the diary significantly, "also had something to say. . . ." A few days later the 13th Brigade, almost equally dishevelled, went past Cox, who had driven out specially to view the march.<sup>20</sup> "Sore feet," says the brigade diary, "was probably not the only cause for this, as last night the 1st Australian Division passed through, and halted at some of the billets of this brigade, and there were many meetings of old friends at *Estaminets*, etc., and a good deal of liquor consumed." But all three brigade commanders were men capable of dealing with such troubles. Though of widely different types all were hard fighters. Brand, an Australian regular who had succeeded Monash in the old 4th Brigade, after causing a first shock to his troops by the delivery of what seemed an extraordinarily inept and egoistic oration, was already living down its effects by the minute care and soldierly thoroughness of his methods of training his brigade in a new scheme of attack. Glasfurd of the 12th was still the boyish, loyal, and devoted, if somewhat old-fashioned, Scot, who had worked incessantly among the bullets during the establishment of the firing-line at Anzac. Glasgow, the other member of a strong three, was a militiaman with a partly militia staff, and his brigade was not destined to be immediately put in. The first brigade for the line was the 12th, its 45th Battalion (New South Wales) to relieve the 5th Brigade south of the main road, and the 48th (Western Australia) to take over the front of the 27th (7th Brigade) from the windmill to The Elbow. The 48th was led by the most famous fighting commander in the A.I.F., Lieutenant-Colonel Ray Leane, whose younger brother would be in charge of the battalion on his left in the line, the 28th.<sup>21</sup> This was the same Leane who, as captain of

<sup>20</sup> The brigade diary states that 310 men fell out with permission, and 46 without.

<sup>21</sup> The 28th, after being withdrawn from the windmill at 4 p.m., took over the sector next to the north, relieving the 25th.

the 11th, had led the raid upon Gaba Tepe. Like many other strong men, he possessed a somewhat "difficult" temperament; but stern, clean, intensely virile, with a jaw as square as his great shoulders and a cheek muscle that seemed to be always clenched, with a sense of duty which constantly involved his battalion in the most dangerous tasks, and a sense of honour which always ensured that he or one of his family bore the brunt, he was creating a magnificent unit. Having one of his brothers<sup>22</sup> as adjutant, and several other relatives among its officers or in the ranks,<sup>23</sup> it was jocosely known throughout the A.I.F. as the "Joan of Arc Battalion."<sup>24</sup>

The 48th had been specially asked to clear the wounded of the 7th Brigade who were understood to be still lying in the abandoned O.G.2. On its left would be the 28th under Lieutenant A. Brown, who had been sent forward at 5.30 p.m. with the remnant of a company from Tramway Trench to relieve the 25th. Through a terrific barrage, it moved into Pozières just before dusk. The bombardment had been so constant and severe that every commander from Birdwood down anticipated a heavy counter-attack. On receiving this warning Glasfurd ordered Leane to station two companies in the O.G. Lines and two in Tramway Trench. Leane, who had previously taken his company commanders to reconnoitre by way of "K" Trench—where for an hour they had been pinned by the barrage and two of them placed out of action—was convinced that an attempt to crowd the Pozières trenches with his companies at full strength would result in useless slaughter. His own plan had been to hold the front lines and Tramway Trench with two companies and leave the other two well in rear of the village.<sup>25</sup> The sharp difference which parted these two gallant leaders was never again closed. Although Glasfurd eventually gave Leane a written order advising him to station both reserve companies in front of Pozières, Leane placed there only one, retaining the other south of Pozières. Disobedience to orders in war is a most

<sup>22</sup> Capt. (afterwards Major) B. B. Leane, 48th Bn. Warehouseman; of Prospect, S. Aust.; b. Prospect, 19 May, 1889. Killed in action, 10 April, 1917.

<sup>23</sup> Including Lieutenants A. E. Leane (of Adelaide) and T. C. Fairley (of Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.).

<sup>24</sup> Made of All-Leanes.

<sup>25</sup> It happened that corps headquarters had recommended a similar plan to Legge.



dangerous practice, involving risk usually far greater than is recognised by the person who disobeys. But on this occasion the action appears to have been fully justified by its results.

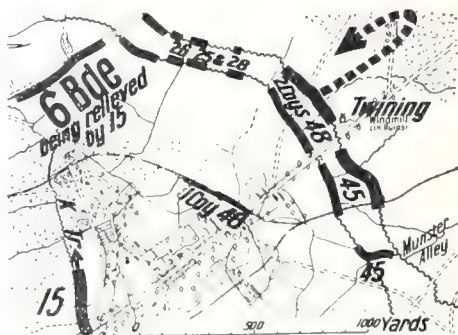
The night of that relief, August 5th-6th, Leane said long afterwards, was the worst in his whole experience of the war. At "K" Trench the 15th Battalion (4th Brigade), which also was moving in during that night to the northern sector to relieve the whole of the 6th Brigade, was brought to a complete standstill, after two of its platoons and the Lewis guns had struggled through, by what one of its leaders<sup>26</sup> afterwards described as "the heaviest barrage the battalion ever saw on relief." As the loss was severe, the movement of the 15th was discontinued until next morning, when the shelling eased. But the relief of the O.G. garrison from The Elbow southwards was much more urgent. The raw full-strength companies of the 12th Brigade moved forward in the dark under shell-fire so dense that men were falling everywhere. Leane could nowhere find the commander of the 27th, whom he was to relieve, nor could his forward companies find the front-line garrison. Dead and wounded lay everywhere, some killed on their stretchers, with the stretcher-bearers lying dead beside them; but the remnant of the much-tried 27th appears to have been withdrawn without waiting for the actual completion of relief.<sup>27</sup> The troops of the 48th occupied O.G.1, but their shouts through the dark brought no answer from anyone in front, nor could they find O.G.2; that line, indeed, would probably have been left unoccupied if a junior officer, Lieutenant Cumming,<sup>28</sup> had not insisted on leading his men forward in further search of it. They scoured the ground so far in front of the crest that at dawn Lieutenant A. Brown, commanding the forward line of the 28th, seeing them returning up the hill from the direction of Courcellette ("a mile in front of the windmill," as he afterwards reported),

<sup>26</sup> Major McSharry. Its colonel was Cannan, formerly commandant at Quinn's Post, Anzac, of which McSharry, then of the 2nd Light Horse, had been the adjutant (*see Vol. II, p. 201*).

<sup>27</sup> According to Paton's orders, this battalion should, upon withdrawal from the O.G. Lines, garrison Tramway Trench in rear of the 26th and 28th. The battalion commander, however, did not retain his men there, but withdrew and reorganised them in Sausage Gully.

<sup>28</sup> Capt. D. G. C. Cumming, M.C.; 48th Bn. Farmer; of Doodlakine, W. Aust.; b. Millicent, S. Aust., 29 Sept., 1891. Killed in action, 3 May, 1918.

at first mistook them for Germans.<sup>29</sup> They eventually found the site of O.G.2 and settled into its shell-holes, the Lewis gunners, as ordered, occupying craters in front while a trench was being dug. Near the windmill Sergeant Twining,<sup>30</sup> of the battalion scouts, unable to find O.G.2, took position with ten men slightly in advance of the windmill. Thus the O.G. Lines had again been occupied—this time by a strong but very inexperienced garrison; but so heavy was the bombardment which fell upon them during the night that Colonel Leane, visiting them in the morning, found the trenches merely a string of shell-holes tenanted by dead and wounded and a bare remnant of his two companies.<sup>31</sup>



When daylight broke on August 6th the wide plateau in front of the 48th still appeared to be unoccupied, though at dawn German troops were observed down the hill towards

<sup>29</sup> So did General Page Croft, who also saw them "coming over the rise from Martinpuich." On their turning to face the enemy he conjectured that they were Australians returning from a "hunting expedition." They brought in a few prisoners. A few of their own men were left in shell-holes far in front and were taken prisoners by the enemy.

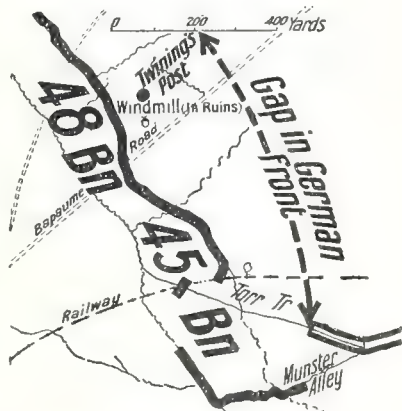
<sup>30</sup> Capt. D. A. Twining, M.C., M.M.; 48th Bn. Student; of Ballarat, Vic., and Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.; b. South Yarra, Vic., 19 Nov., 1895.

<sup>31</sup> The severity of the strain placed upon stretcher-bearers and runners, who had to penetrate the barrage, is illustrated by an incident recorded by Captain B. B. Leane, the adjutant of the 48th. "I have seen men . . . weeping like babies," he wrote, "cowering at every explosion. . . . My own observer, a good type of boy, was sent back . . . with a message to bring me up some runners. Early on the morning of the 6th I heard someone come tumbling along calling out my name. He rushed up to me, looking like a maniac, crying out: 'Message for Captain Leane. I mustn't give it to anyone but Captain Leane.' I said: 'Here I am, lad, it's all right!' He looked wildly at me as I went to take the message from him, and then jumped back. 'No, don't take it,' he cried out; 'no one but the adjutant must take it.' I said: 'All right, old man, I'm the adjutant.' He recognised me then, and collapsed on the ground, crying like a child, and talking wildly about his having started off with six runners for me, and getting blown up twice and all the others killed. I saw at once what had happened, and made him lie down in a fairly sheltered place. Soon he was sleeping heavily, but several times he started up wildly, his face full of terror. In the morning he was very weak, and I sent him to the rear to rest. That afternoon he was back, and, although he was still full of terror, he fought it down, and several times went out to the most advanced portion of the line under intense fire, until at last he said to me: 'It's no good, sir; I'd go out willingly but, I can't face it any more.' I said: 'All right, lad, don't worry, you've done well.' . . . When he was more sane he told me . . . he had started to guide them (the six runners for whom he had been sent). . . . He was buried by the earth from an explosion, and . . . another shell exploded at his feet, killed three of the runners, wounded the others, and threw him several yards away. But he stuck to it until he got to me."

Courcelette, where they stopped when fired on. This was correctly reported by the 26th Battalion as an attempt by the enemy to counter-attack,<sup>32</sup> although the visible movement was so slight that other parts of the garrison afterwards doubted whether it had occurred. Patrols of the 28th had during the night moved a quarter of a mile in that direction, killing a few scattered Germans, and a party of the 18th Battalion had gone without opposition 300 yards along the Bapaume road towards the sugar factory. Except for the dead who lay thickly near the O.G. Lines, the plateau west of the windmill appeared at day-break empty of the enemy. This day, however, German stretcher-bearers again came out from the Bapaume road. The movements of one pair, who persisted in approaching the line near the windmill, strongly aroused the suspicion of Sergeant Twining. After signalling to them in vain to retire, he shot one bearer, and there dropped from the stretcher, not a wounded German, but a bag. This afforded

some evidence that the enemy stretcher-bearers were not all genuine, but that some were scouting. It is now known that an important scouting expedition in this neighbourhood was undertaken that day by an officer of the 86th R.I.R., who was sent out to discover the extent of the gap in the enemy's line near the windmill.<sup>33</sup>

The officer was wounded, but he brought back definite information. Whether the bearers



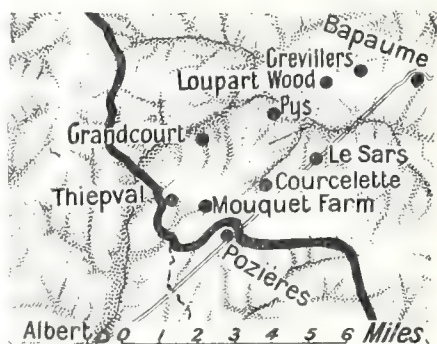
were or were not connected with this reconnaissance, the suspicion that the enemy was probing in this area was correct. Three of his balloons were in the air—a comparatively rare occurrence, though the western horizon was fringed with those of the Allies. In the afternoon a number of German aeroplanes

<sup>32</sup> See p. 722. South of the Bapaume road the 45th Battalion also reported that it had been attacked, but had easily repulsed the enemy.

<sup>33</sup> *History of the 86th R.I.R.*, p. 156. The morality of scouting under the Red Cross flag is discussed on pp. 836-7 in connection with a similar action—unique in the records of the A.I.F.—by an Australian.



came over, and at 5 o'clock his bombardment, which had been heavy most of the day, appeared to become denser and more accurate. During the previous night General Gough had informed the Anzac Corps of his opinion that, provided quick communication could be obtained with the artillery, a sufficient garrison for the whole eastern front of the corps was 4 Vickers and 12 Lewis guns in O.G.2, and 16 Vickers and 48 Lewis guns in O.G.1. This advice was passed to the brigades; but the difficulty under such a bombardment was to ensure communication not merely with the artillery but between even neighbouring posts of the infantry. Without it, sections of the garrison could be destroyed and machine-guns smashed or buried without even the neighbouring posts being aware of the fact. Nevertheless the garrison of O.G.2 was thinned; the forward companies of the 48th—whose trenches Leane found crowded with dead and wounded—were concentrated in O.G.1, leaving only Lewis-gun posts in the craters of O.G.2. In the sector of the 28th, Lieutenant A. Brown, still in command, sent most of the riflemen to the rear<sup>34</sup> and held the battalion front with four Lewis guns. The 2nd Divisional staff, assuming that the enemy's fire was directed from his balloons, asked if aeroplanes could be sent out to shoot them down. But the available air squadron, the 7th, was not suitable for that task, though it undertook to direct counter-battery fire upon the enemy's guns. The bombardment eased towards sundown. Several movements of the enemy had been observed in the country now visible to the Australians. Lieutenants Malpas<sup>35</sup> and Everett<sup>36</sup> of the 7th Machine Gun Company, whose guns were still in the line, had reported a number of Germans on the slope between



<sup>34</sup> Under Lieutenant R. Brown (of Brighton, Vic., and Coonabarabran, N.S.W.), who had assisted him throughout the day.

<sup>35</sup> Lieut. H. E. Malpas, 7th M.G. Coy. Draughtsman; of Unley, S. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 30 Oct., 1894. Killed in action, 7 Aug., 1916.

<sup>36</sup> Lieut. E. S. Everett, M.C.; 22nd M.G. Coy. Salesman; of Albany, W. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 4 May, 1895.



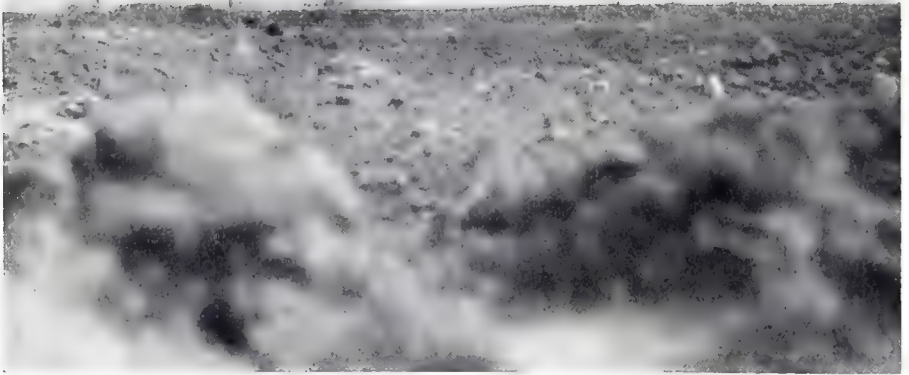


51. THE WINDMILL AT POZIÈRES, 11TH OCTOBER, 1916

The view is northward from the main road. *Inset*: Pozieres main street and the windmill before the war.

*Inset*: War Memorial Official Photo, No. E15.

*Inset*: Lent by M. G. Lelong, 21 Rue St. Martin, Amiens.



52. VIEW FROM O.G.I NORTH-EASTWARDS OVER THE GREEN COUNTRY  
BEHIND THE GERMAN LINES

The trees are those of Courcelette.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ111.  
Taken on 28th August, 1916.*



53. VIEW FROM O.G.I NORTHWARDS TOWARDS MOUQUET FARM

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. EZ101.  
Taken on 28th August, 1916.*

*To face p. 713.*

Mouquet Farm and Courcelette.<sup>37</sup> Farther off a slow procession of white-hooded waggons was observed winding down from the distant village of Grevillers (near Bapaume) towards Courcelette, presumably bringing troops for some counter-attack.<sup>38</sup> A German battery could still be seen near Courcelette and a line of guns farther back near Pys. The Australian infantry refrained from firing on any distant target during this day, since they could effect little and would only attract attention to their own position.

The 7th Company's machine-guns, which opened upon some infantry seen emerging from among distant trees, could not perceive the effect.<sup>39</sup> An observing officer of the 6th Field Artillery Brigade was accordingly summoned to O.G.2, and about dusk the machine-gunners were cheered by seeing the shells of their artillery playing havoc among some of the German batteries then in action. About the same time an airman observed an enemy relief or reinforcements pouring along a communication trench to the Feste Zollern, north of Mouquet Farm.<sup>40</sup>

But even without these signs the severity of the bombardment rendered it almost certain that a counter-attack was imminent. Before noon on the 6th, the 7th Machine Gun Company reported three of its guns out of action, and in the 12th Brigade five Lewis guns and one Vickers had been destroyed. At 2.30 p.m. Colonel Leane of the 48th reported that there was every indication that a counter-attack would occur during the following night. Shattering loss had been inflicted upon his two front-line companies by the bombardment; five of his Lewis guns were out of action, and his wisdom in retaining a fresh company behind Pozières was very apparent. This company he now brought forward to relieve the other two,<sup>41</sup> leaving the support company unmoved in Tramway Trench.

<sup>37</sup> Their position was about the German "Fabeck Trench." Germans furiously digging a trench had been visible there on the previous day, also. This was apparently a new communication trench leading southwards, which was destroyed in the bombardment of August 8.

<sup>38</sup> The troops who eventually counter-attacked the Australian position, however, came on foot.

<sup>39</sup> Those of the 6th Brigade, however, under Lieutenant F. Windsor are said to have hit forty or fifty of a German working party.

<sup>40</sup> Part of the II/86th R.I.R. and possibly of the 63rd I.R. were in this trench.

<sup>41</sup> These two companies were brought out to the head of Contalmaison Valley. As they assembled round their cookers (kitchens), a shell burst among them, killing 26 and wounding 14.







The German bombardment that night was heaviest upon the O.G. Lines, although it fell also upon the rear, Sausage Valley, Bécourt Wood, Tara Hill, and Albert being methodically shelled from dusk onwards. In the front line the "coalboxes" (as the men called the 5.9- and 8-inch shells), bursting on all sides with wicked crashes and dense black smoke, before long drove the men of the 14th—who had till then been digging in small parties along their trenches—to join the nearest groups of their mates. Making perilous rushes over the exposed sectors separating them, the survivors for-gathered chiefly about the deep dugouts in O.G.1, which were comparatively safe, although their stairways opened towards the enemy. Nevertheless as the night wore on the incessant shelling caused terrible loss along the whole of O.G.1. It missed, however, most of the small advanced posts in O.G.2. Towards dawn,<sup>44</sup> on the extreme right of the 14th, Lieutenant Jacka (the same who won the first Victoria Cross awarded to an Australian at Anzac), holding—as he thought—a support position in O.G.1 near The Elbow, climbed up from the dugout occupied by his platoon and, after looking out into the dark for any sign of impending attack, returned to his men with the remark that things were "just the same." North of him in O.G.1 Lieutenant Dobbie,<sup>45</sup> part of whose platoon under Sergeant Mortimer<sup>46</sup> was a hundred yards to the left front in O.G.2,<sup>47</sup> sent forward a scout to find out whether the enemy was moving. An order to "stand to" had just been shouted along the line from the 15th on the left, when at about 4 o'clock<sup>48</sup> the enemy's barrage suddenly ceased upon the O.G. Lines and began to fall heavily far back beyond Pozières. The forward posts immediately observed large

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<sup>44</sup> Of Monday, August 7.

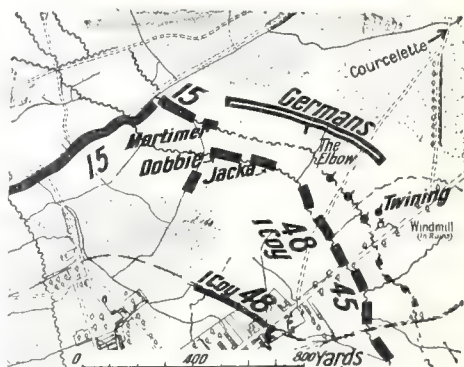
<sup>45</sup> Lieut. H. S. Dobbie, M.C.; 14th Bn. Clerk; of Footscray, Vic.; b. Footscray, 7 July, 1892. Died of wounds, 7 Aug., 1916.

<sup>46</sup> Sgt. D. H. Mortimer (No. 2446, 14th Bn.). Grazier; of Wodonga district, Vic.; b. North Wangaratta, Vic., 8 Sept., 1891.

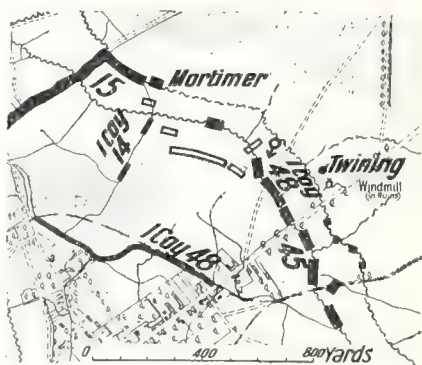
<sup>47</sup> Mortimer and his men were unaware of the existence of the two lines, and believed themselves in a forward bend of O.G.1. Some pioneers had spent the night in a plucky attempt to dig the communication trench connecting these lines.

<sup>48</sup> Accounts differ as to the exact time. Some say 3.50; others 4; others 4.10 a.m. and even later. "Daylight saving" being in operation, the true time would be 2.50, 3, or 3.10 a.m.

numbers of men moving towards them up the slope from Courcelette. The advancing line was not continuous—its northern flank was so directed that it would pass just south of the section of O.G.2 occupied by the 14th and 15th. As it approached and swept past, only thirty yards distant, Sergeant Mortimer of the 14th and his few men, after waiting for a moment to make sure that the advancing men were



Germans,<sup>49</sup> poured into them the most rapid fire they could compass. From farther north the 15th also opened fire. "But we could not shoot them all," as Mortimer afterwards said, and the line swept on without stopping, its southern end hidden in the grey shadows of dawn. Its southern flank was being similarly fired into by Sergeant Twining's small post of the 48th near the windmill, now reduced to four men, their Lewis gun having also been blown up. In accordance with orders, the other advanced posts of the 48th in O.G.2 retired upon O.G.1, the garrison of which opened fire. On meeting with this opposition the Germans began to bomb, and, sweeping quickly over the apparently deserted trenches of the 14th and 48th near The Elbow,<sup>50</sup> staying merely to roll a bomb or two into the deep dugouts of O.G.1, they advanced down the western slope towards Pozières.



<sup>49</sup> Mortimer's post recognised them by their overcoats. The Australians carried none.

<sup>50</sup> They afterwards reported that they had crossed a trench destroyed by bombardment.

The left flank of the penetrating enemy swung southwards in rear of the north flank of the 48th, which was engaged in firing at a machine-gun crew on its front, and attacked it from flank and rear with rifle-fire and bombs. The Western Australians replied with such bombs as they possessed, but they were fast shot down. Their commander, Captain Hartley,<sup>51</sup> who throughout the night had never ceased to encourage his men, was mortally wounded. Their own bomb-supply ran short, and, upon the enemy closing in, one of the officers on whom the command had devolved ordered his men to surrender. About forty were thus captured and, in charge of a strong guard, were sent off in the direction of the valley leading to Courcellette.

By this time the British and Australian barrage, which had been called for by S.O.S. rockets and by Colonel Leane, was descending so strongly as to bar the approach of enemy supports from Courcellette; indeed an aeroplane afterwards brought back the report that this bombardment had caught and scattered a body of Germans massed near that village. But inside the Australian lines an unusual situation had developed. For some minutes the Australians<sup>52</sup> on the northern flank of the attack had maintained a constant fire upon the right flank of the German advance. As the Germans penetrated beyond the O.G. Lines they became visible to the whole semicircle of Australian supports in Centre Way, Tom's Cut, and Tramway Trench, some of whom—among them the Lewis guns of the 26th still at the front under Lieutenant Cooper<sup>53</sup>—at first joined in the fusillade. There followed, within the sight of many of the onlooking troops, an incident of which there remain numerous descriptions. The easy attitudes of the Germans on the hill gave the impression that they had overcome the local opposition and were about to settle down or reorganise. Suddenly a party of no more than eight Australians, led by an officer, was seen to spring from a fold in the ground and charge them from their rear. An

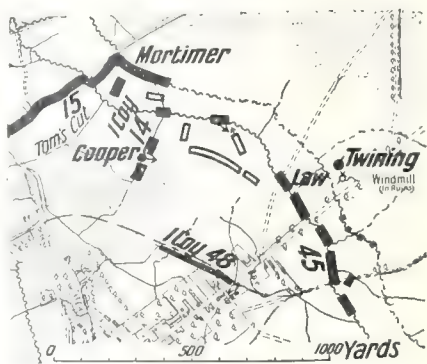
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<sup>51</sup> Capt. W. G. Hartley, 48th Bn. Grocer; of Port Adelaide, S. Aust.; b. Terowie, S. Aust., 4 May, 1894. Died of wounds, 9 Aug., 1916.

<sup>52</sup> Including some of the machine-guns of the 7th Company, still in the line.

<sup>53</sup> Cooper himself, his head bandaged, was working one of the guns.

immediate change came over the battlefield; other Australians apparently resumed the attack, and the slope in rear of O.G.I became the scene of an extraordinary aggregation of separate hand-to-hand conflicts, Germans and Australians being intermingled "like players in rival football teams."<sup>54</sup> What happened was this. It has been mentioned that Lieutenant Jacka of the 14th, commanding the southern



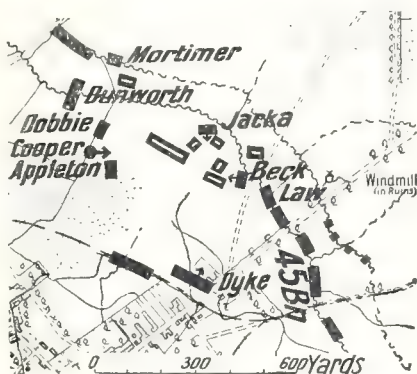
platoon of the 14th in O.G.I, had gone up at dawn to the trench and found the bombardment still falling heavily. He had not long returned to the underground chamber, which was still densely dark, when his men, some of whom were sleeping after the heavy strain, were roused by a deafening explosion at the foot of the stairs. The attacking Germans had reached the dugout entrance and had rolled a bomb down the shaft. Two revolver shots were immediately heard: Jacka had fired at the German bomber up the stairway. At once he rushed up, followed by his men, who had to scramble over two of their groaning mates, maimed by the bomb. The enemy had swept past, and could be seen in large numbers between this dugout and the village of Pozières. Jacka instantly decided to line up all the sound men he could find, seven or eight in number, and to dash through the enemy back to Pozières. His men had hardly been drawn up when he saw the column of the 48th Battalion's prisoners and their escort returning towards him. He let them come to within thirty yards and then jumped out of the back of the trench and charged. About half the German guards threw down their rifles, but the rest opened fire, and every man of Jacka's small party was hit with rifle bullets. Seeing Jacka's movement, a sergeant of the 48th, Beck,<sup>55</sup> instantly charged

<sup>54</sup> *The History of the 14th Battalion*, by Newton Wanliss (shortly to be published).

<sup>55</sup> L/Sgt. C. H. Beck (No. 2379, 48th Bn.). Surveyor's assistant; of Essendon, Vic.; b. Wangaratta, Vic., 1889. Killed in action, 7 Aug., 1916. [Sergeant R. G. McKail (a forestry officer of South Australia), though his leg had been blown off by a bomb, lay in the trench encouraging his men until he died.]



forward to his assistance with a small party from the trench of that battalion. The captured men of the 48th also broke away, some of them seizing the rifles of their guard, while the remainder of the guard began to shoot them down. The fight immediately became a *mêlée*, into the thick of which Jacka and the survivors of his small party plunged. At this stage parties of Australians from most of the unattacked portions in the surrounding area almost automatically began to make towards the struggle. Lieutenant Dunworth<sup>56</sup> led his platoon of the 15th from the north towards a party of the enemy who, on seeing Jacka's attack, had turned back and sunk into shell-holes. From the west Major Fuhrmann,<sup>57</sup> commanding the forward company of the 14th with his headquarters in the dug-outs in Centre Way, sent his supporting platoon under Lieutenant Appleton.<sup>58</sup> Lieutenant Law<sup>59</sup> of the 48th, who with a remnant of his company—about forty strong—had held firmly throughout, succeeded at the very commencement of the attack in sending through a message to battalion headquarters. Colonel Leane at once ordered one of his few remaining officers, Lieutenant Dyke,<sup>60</sup> to reinforce with two platoons from Tramway Trench, south-west of the fight. A German machine-gun crew had established itself in a shell-hole 200 yards down the slope towards Tramway Trench, and the advancing Australians had consequently to observe some caution; but the forward movement was continuous, determined-looking men silently making forward on



<sup>56</sup> Lieut.-Col. D. Dunworth, M.C.; 15th Bn. Survey draughtsman; of Sydney; b. Newcastle West, Co. Limerick, Ireland, 23 Dec., 1888.

<sup>57</sup> Major O. C. W. Fuhrmann, O.B.E.; 53rd Bn. Public servant; b. Melbourne, 29 July, 1889.

<sup>58</sup> Lieut. F. W. Appleton, 14th Bn. Clerk; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. South Melbourne, Vic., 1882. Killed in action, 8 Aug., 1918.

<sup>59</sup> Lieut. O. R. Law, 48th Bn. Journalist; of East Torrens, S. Aust.; b. Sydney, 13 Nov., 1890. Killed in action, 14 Aug., 1916.

<sup>60</sup> Dyke was killed in carrying out these orders. (Lieut. G. C. Dyke, 48th Bn. Barrister, traveller, and author; of London; b. Kennington, Surrey, Eng., 12 Aug., 1876.)

all sides from shell-hole to shell-hole, relying on their bayonets alone—since the Australians ahead of them were so intermingled with Germans as to render firing impossible. "In front of them" (wrote a sergeant of the 14th<sup>61</sup>) "was one of the queerest sights I've ever seen—Huns and Aussies were scattered in ones and twos all along the side of the hill. . . . Each Aussie seemed as if he was having a war all on his own."

Some were shooting point-blank at others face to face with them. Others were fighting with the bayonet, this being one of the few occasions when bayonets were really crossed. Others were on their knees in front of standing figures, praying for their lives. The Germans included a number of bombers, and some were fighting from shell-holes. Jacka dived in among them, killing and capturing a number, but receiving a wound which nearly killed him; the gallant Beck was killed; but the appearance of Lieutenant Appleton's platoon approaching together with some of Lieutenant Dobbie's appears to have settled the issue, for the Germans suddenly surrendered.<sup>62</sup> Jacka's counter-attack, which led directly to this result, stands as the most dramatic and effective act of individual audacity in the history of the A.I.F.

Other parties, who had fallen back northwards into the pocket behind the O.G. Lines, were captured by Lieutenant Dunworth and Sergeant Mortimer. Within an hour the area was clear of the enemy; the shell-fire had eased; the wounded were brought in; the O.G. Lines near the windmill for a time lay vacant, and Sergeant Twining's post, in which almost every man had been hit during the three days of its existence, was also brought in.<sup>63</sup> At 2.30 p.m. the 47th began to relieve the 48th and the whole front line was gradually reoccupied. Next morning reports of further weak counter-attacks came in from the troops in Munster Alley and from those on the northern front.

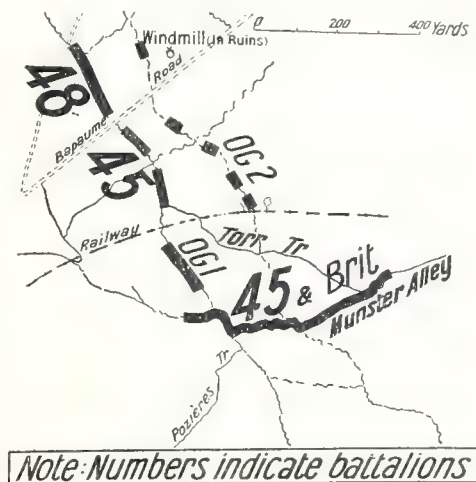
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<sup>61</sup> Sergeant (later Lieutenant) E. J. Rule.

<sup>62</sup> The contrast between the clean-shaven, dapper Germans with their full, neat equipment and polished boots and the battle-stained Australians who watched them down the communication trench on their way to the rear was striking.

<sup>63</sup> Twining went back to bring in his wounded, and was himself hit in doing so.

This proved the last attempt made by the enemy to recapture the crest east of Pozzières. The greater part of Munster Alley also was at last seized by the 8th Yorkshire Regiment, which, attacking on the evening of August 6th, and supported during the night by the 45th Australian Battalion,<sup>64</sup> captured that trench almost to the Switch. No operation exhibited more clearly the futility of local attacks on strong positions. This trench was assaulted at least six times, and the last enterprise would doubtless have failed, like all its predecessors, if the recent capture of the crest on either flank of it had not entirely altered the conditions.



German accounts show that the order for the recapture of the Pozzières plateau was issued on August 5.<sup>65</sup> Generals von Boehn and Wellmann had decided that it was useless to renew the attack either in full daylight or with the tired troops of the 18th Reserve Division. The IX Reserve Corps had available the 63rd Infantry Regiment (Silesians, normally belonging to the 12th Division, which had suffered so heavily on July 1). This regiment was, as already described, sent on August 5 to the support positions west of Courcellette, and the heavy artillery was directed to prepare with all available batteries for a counter-attack at dawn on August 6, the artillery of the 17th Division and 17th and 18th Reserve Divisions being also turned upon the area. By General von Boehn's desire, General Wellmann himself took direct charge of the arrangements. In addition to the three battalions of the 63rd, he was given the II/157th and I/163rd. He accordingly divided his force into two, the II/157th and II and III/63rd (under Colonel Megede of the 63rd) to attack along the northern half of the front, and the I/163rd and I/63rd (under Colonel Balhasar of the 84th R.I.R.) on the southern half.

<sup>64</sup> The 45th sent its regimental bombers under Lieutenant L. D. Ferguson and two platoons of Captain G. E. Knox's company. In this fighting, Privates J. Blackburn and John Welsh of the 45th held the Germans back while a block was being built. (Ferguson belonged to Sydney, N.S.W.; Knox to Redfern; Blackburn to Bathurst; and Welsh to Annandale.)

<sup>65</sup> This is possibly General von Below's order quoted on p. 699.

All available troops of the 84th and 86th R.I.R.,<sup>66</sup> some light machine-guns, pioneers, and *flammenwerfer* squads were to assist.

In the early hours of August 6 General Wellmann drove to his special headquarters at Warlencourt, where in due course news reached him that the left and extreme right of the attack had succeeded, and that the windmill heights had been recaptured. Under that impression, he handed back the local command to the brigadiers and at 8.30 a.m. drove back to his own headquarters at Haplincourt. Yet, so far from the truth were the reports that most of the Australians on the heights not only were unaware of the enemy's attempt, but actually saw no sign of his movement. South of the Bapaume road the 45th Australian Battalion reported that an attack had been easily driven off with machine-gun and rifle fire. A report from German sources afterwards stated that the I/63rd attacking in that sector had been severely repulsed. North of the road part of the 63rd advanced from Courcellette until it met with fire and then dug in,<sup>67</sup> a quarter-of-a-mile or more short of its objective. The II/157th, with part of the 9th Reserve Jäger, after three attempts reoccupied part of the O.G. Lines immediately north of the Australian flank, including, apparently, their actual junction with Brind's Road.

It was not until some hours after daylight that the regimental staffs became aware that the Australians still held the windmill, opposite which was a gap in the German front. A patrol was, as already related,<sup>68</sup> sent out to probe the position there, and ascertained precisely where the German flank near Munster Alley lay. The Germans were thus on August 6 sure of their two flanks on Pozières Heights, but the main attempt must be repeated next morning by the II and III/63rd, its objective being the whole of the O.G. Lines between these points. North of the main road two companies of the 63rd were already in line in front of Courcellette, and two were in the fourth line (apparently the Fabeck Graben between Mouquet Farm and Courcellette). Four others had to take up their "jumping-off" position during the night, and those from the north had to carry out an awkward right-wheel as the attack commenced. The light protective-barrage of the Australian artillery caused them to sweep rather too far to the south, and the right-flank companies (of the II/63rd) consequently struck the O.G. Lines near The Elbow, leaving the northern sector unattacked. In the mist of the morning they reached O.G.2 almost without loss, but at that point met a deadly enfilade of rifles and machine-guns. The 12th company made forty prisoners, but was then counter-attacked, losing its prisoners and nearly the whole of its strength—only thirty returned.

Of the II Battalion, attacking farther south, the 7th company, which was to have formed part of the first wave, could not find its starting-point, the Bayern Riegel, until shortly before day-break, and consequently the 8th company had to go forward alone, with the 5th and 6th as second wave. These companies seem to have guided themselves by the Courcellette-Pozières road to a point north of the windmill, from which they were beaten back by machine-guns and

<sup>66</sup> Orders that "all available troops" from the garrison of the line, or from used-up battalions in support positions, should assist appear to have had little actual result. No part of the 86th R.I.R., for example, actually attacked.

<sup>67</sup> This was the attack reported by the 26th Australian Battalion. See pp. 710-11. Possibly the Germans reached some old trench which they mistook for the O.G. Lines.

<sup>68</sup> See p. 711.



bombs. The troops—possibly I/63rd—who were to have attacked south of the road are said to have retired, and to have thus left the flank of the northern attack in the air. The 8th and 12th companies were practically annihilated; the 7th, though it failed to attack, lost forty men, and the 10th twenty. The casualties of the other companies are not recorded in the available data.

On August 8 part of the 63rd Regiment made a local attack in the southern sector and part of the 11th R.I.R. in the northern. The former was easily beaten by the 45th Battalion and British infantry; the latter was (according to German accounts) caught in a barrage—probably the preparatory bombardment for the next northward attack—and failed with heavy loss.

The objective of this assault was the whole of the trenches lost on August 4th. They were, however, attacked from the east only, not from the north, and by a much smaller force than that employed by the Australians in their capture. The German bombardment, whether measured by the loss inflicted or by the destruction of the trenches, might well have been deemed adequate, but the counter-attack, though it broke through the Australian centre, never had the least chance of final success. The Australian troops were not attacked on either flank, and, despite its crushing losses, even the centre still strongly resisted. The bombardment, which was heavier than most of the battalions engaged were ever again to experience, had indeed caused shattering loss.<sup>69</sup> In one day and two nights the 48th Battalion had lost, mainly by shell-fire, 20 officers and 578 men, and the 45th south of the road, by shell-fire alone, 5 officers and 340 men.<sup>70</sup> After this action only four men remained unwounded in Jacka's platoon of the 14th: the platoon of Lieutenant Dobbie, who was killed, suffered almost as much, the casualties of the front-line company of the 14th in this tour totalling over 150.<sup>71</sup> But, sharp though the losses of the incoming division were, it was upon the 2nd Division that the strain of the Pozieres bombardment chiefly fell. Entering the battle when the shell-fire following the first attack was at its highest, it had

<sup>69</sup> The work of the 48th's medical officer, Major H. H. Woollard (of Melbourne), in Tramway Trench, and of its "padre," Chaplain the Rev. W. Devine (of Lancefield, Vic., and Castlederg, Co. Tyrone, Ireland), in the burial of the dead, is referred to by Colonel Leane as "an example to all."

<sup>70</sup> Immediately after entering the line, the 45th lost Major D. Chapman by shell-fire; Lieutenant C. McK. Draper, with his N.C.O's around him, was killed soon after. In the 48th Lieutenants G. C. Dyke, O. V. Richardson, W. G. A. Walter, B. H. Ottaway, S. S. Hawke, and J. G. Cosson were killed. (Chapman, who is believed to have been the first Australian to land at Anzac, was originally in the 9th Bn. He belonged to Brisbane, Q'land; Draper to Hunter River district, N.S.W.; Dyke to London; Richardson to Unley, S. Aust.; Walter to Blackwood, W. Aust., and Sydney, N.S.W.; Ottaway to Perth, W. Aust.; Hawke to Thebarton, S. Aust.; and Cosson to Kalgoorlie and East Fremantle, W. Aust.)

<sup>71</sup> Almost all of these were inflicted in the first 48 hours.

sustained twelve days of practically continuous bombardment such as was seldom experienced on any front. Under this the troops had carried through their extensive works, brought forward their supplies, and, after a repulse that would have shattered weaker men, stormed and held one of the key positions on this battlefield. Its men were sustained partly by the determination that the division must succeed in its first great offensive; but the strain had been excessive. The division lost 6,846 killed, wounded, and missing (including about 40 prisoners);<sup>72</sup> and of the wounded a large proportion were not merely maimed but were suffering in addition from serious "shock."<sup>73</sup> An eyewitness has recorded that, of the patients sitting in front of Vadencourt Château waiting for attention to their flesh wounds, nearly every one was shaking like an aspen leaf—a sure sign of overstrain by shell-fire. The infantry of the division was withdrawn on August 7th<sup>74</sup> and sent to replace that of the 1st in the corps rest area.

<sup>72</sup> Particulars of this loss from July 25 to August 7 were:

5th Brigade.			6th Brigade.			7th Brigade.		
	Off.	O.R.		Off.	O.R.		Off.	O.R.
Bde. H.Q.	—	—	Bde. H.Q.	—	—	Bde. H.Q.	—	1
17th Bn.	13	390	21st Bn.	9	255	25th Bn.	25	660
18th Bn.	22	603	22nd Bn.	27	656	26th Bn.	21	632
19th Bn.	13	440	23rd Bn.	15	461	27th Bn.	13	386
20th Bn.	19	498	24th Bn.	10	430	28th Bn.	20	612
5th M.G. Coy.	2	24	6th M.G. Coy.	1	22	7th M.G. Coy.	3	42
5th T.M. Bty.	1	12	6th T.M. Bty.	—	12	7th T.M. Bty.	—	13
	70	1,967		62	1,836		82	2,346

*Divisional Units.*

Artillery	3	99	Engineers	5	153	Signal Coy.	—	9
Pioneer Bn.	7	196	Medical	1	39	Div. Train	—	3

This gives a total for the division of 6,848. The Administrative War Diary of the 2nd Australian Division shows it as 6,846.

<sup>73</sup> In order to receive cases of shock and overstrain, which would be cured by a short rest, a Corps Rest Station for 600 men was formed at Vadencourt. The bombardments in the Somme area affected also the animals. The diary of the 2nd Mobile Veterinary Section notes that the section was under shell-fire for the first time, and that the horses of the 2nd Division were suffering badly, chiefly from 5.9-inch and 11-inch shells.

<sup>74</sup> Throughout the night of August 7, while Tara Hill was being shelled, the 6th Brigade (just withdrawn from Pozières) was bivouacking there. One projectile, bursting in an old gun-pit occupied by the H.Q. of the 24th Battalion, killed Major C. E. Manning, the second-in-command; Captain W. H. Tatnall, the adjutant; Lieutenant J. B. N. Carvick, the assistant-adjutant, and Captain H. F. H. Plant, the medical officer. Colonel Russell Watson was rescued in a state of collapse. (Manning belonged to Hunter's Hill, N.S.W.; Tatnall to Warrnambool, Vic.; Carvick to Melbourne; Plant to Brisbane; and Watson to Balmain, N.S.W.)

As their much-worn brigades marched out after the severest ordeal ever suffered by the A.I.F., the King, on his way to view the front, met one of them. The troops were for the moment drawn up along the roadside; the King, who had just visited the wounded in the main dressing-station at Warloy, drove slowly past them and spoke to the leaders.<sup>75</sup>

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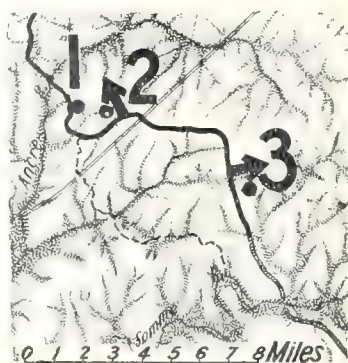
<sup>75</sup> The 6th Brigade on its way out of the line and the 2nd on its way in were present at this unexpected review. The 7th Brigade was also reviewed by the King at Warloy.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE ADVANCE TO MOUQUET FARM

THE northward thrust—the second part of the operation planned by General Gough to drive a wedge along the ridge behind Thiepval—now began. The preparatory bombardments had, indeed, been in progress since August 6th, with a view to breaking down the German trench-system north and north-east of the new Australian position; and with this programme the enemy's bombardment and counter-attack on the 7th had hardly interfered. Practically the whole of the heavy howitzers of the I Anzac and II Corps were engaged upon it.<sup>1</sup> On August 7th orders were issued for the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade, with some assistance on its left from the 12th Division, to launch on the night of the 8th the first of a series of advances along the summit of the ridge towards Mouquet Farm.

With its experience of the Somme battle—waged upon the principles laid down by Sir Douglas Haig—G.H.Q. could calculate with practical certainty upon the date by which each division would be worn out, and was thus able to determine more than a month in advance the railway time-tables for movements. It had been decided that the I Anzac Corps should eventually be relieved by changing places with the



1—Thiepval. 2—Mouquet Farm. 3—Guillemont.  
Arrows show direction of chief British thrusts, August, 1916.

<sup>1</sup> The heavy batteries of the II Corps appear to have been allowed about 2,500 rounds of 6, 8, and 9.2 inch for these bombardments, while I Anzac had been allowed 900, the II Corps generally dealing with trenches west of the Mouquet Farm-Pozières road, and I Anzac with those east of it. II Corps appears to have also been allotted 1,400 heavy shell for the demolition of Skyline Trench, in front of its own troops.



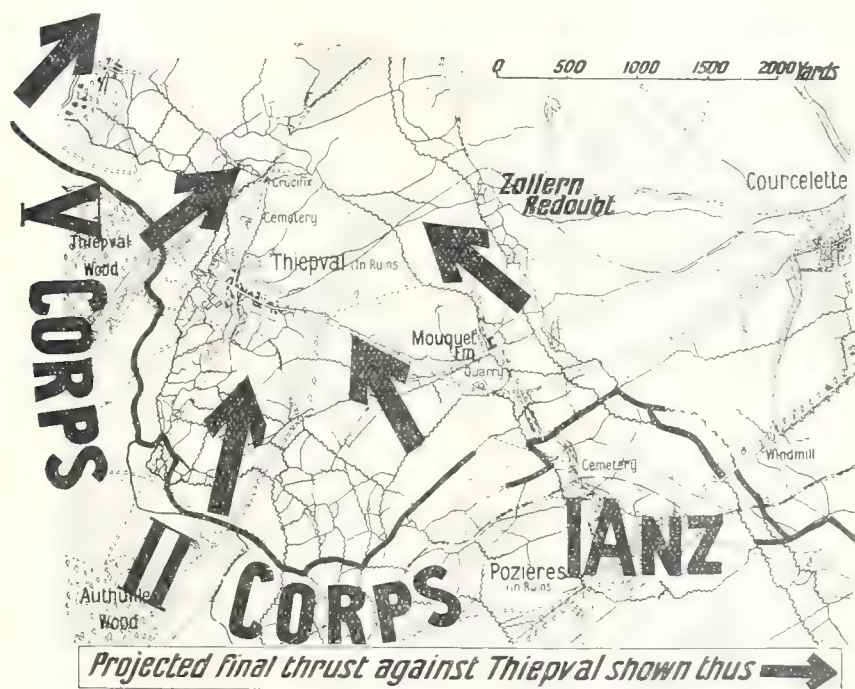
Canadian Corps, then at Ypres, and as early as August 6th a table of movements contained the following:

1st Aust. Division to start entraining<sup>2</sup> (for north) after 6 p.m. on Aug. 25.

2nd Aust. Division to start entraining (for north) after 6 p.m. on Sept. 2.

4th Aust. Division to start entraining (for north) after 6 p.m. on Sept. 6.

To enable corps commanders to determine the tours of their divisions in the line, General Gough had consulted them concerning a forecast of the steps by which Thiepval was to be isolated. According to this, Mouquet Farm would be approached by the Anzac Corps in two leaps, and would then be attacked about August 14th or 15th, the II Corps generally keeping step on the left. Later—probably when the Australians reached the “Zollern Work” half-a-mile



north of Mouquet Farm—a general attack would be delivered by the Reserve Army along both sides of the Ancre (that is

<sup>2</sup> For the area of Second Army, behind whose front Ypres lay.

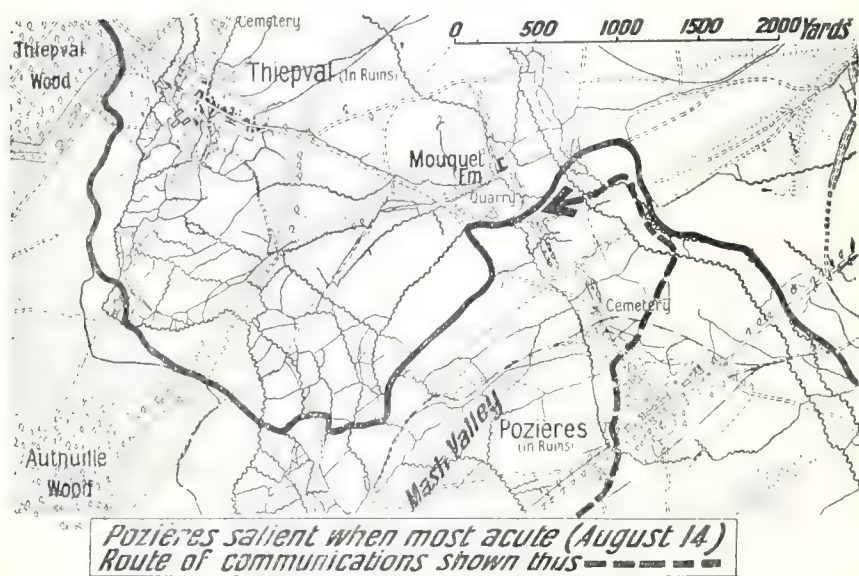
to say, north of Thiepval) as well as from the south and south-west of Thiepval, so as virtually to surround it. This major operation, to be undertaken probably by five divisions, would occur towards the end of the month. It was recognised that this programme was highly speculative and depended entirely upon the success of the Australian thrust along the summit of the ridge.

The series of battles which ensued, repeating as they did within a narrower area most of the horrors of the Pozières fighting, cannot be described with the minuteness hitherto employed. The reader must take for granted many of the conditions—the flayed land, shell-hole bordering shell-hole, corpses of young men lying against the trench walls or in shell-holes; some—except for the dust settling on them—seeming to sleep; others torn in half; others rotting, swollen, and discoloured. He must also take for granted the air fetid with their stench or at times pungent with the chemical reek of high explosive; the troops of both sides—always in desperate need of sleep—working or fighting by night and living by day in niches scooped in the trench side—dangerous places perilously shaken with the crashing thump of each heavy shell whose burst might all too easily shovel them on top of their occupants. Little stretcher parties of four or five constantly worked over the open—often, for want of a red cross flag, under a white handkerchief or other rag; and though the higher staffs, fearing German treachery or deception, frowned upon these proceedings, the front-line troops on both sides, whose mates were slowly dying in the space between the trenches, knew little of these prohibitions, and would not have heeded them if they had known. Battalion and sometimes company headquarters were in captured German dugouts, where, by flickering candle-light and amid the smell of unwashed men, officers and signallers worked day and night, while the worn-out runners or reserves, crowding in all attitudes the staircase and corners, snatched a few minutes' sleep before their next tour of duty. On nights of action, when the enemy's barrage fell, though candles and acetylene

lamps were extinguished by the concussion of each heavy explosion, the deep dugouts remained practically safe, but more than once certain shallower shelters proved dreadful traps, and men were suddenly called upon to rescue their groaning mates crushed by the fallen roof-beams. Yet when, during these barrages, the battalion staff called for "runner," the next messenger on the list would come forward and, receiving his message, climb the dugout stairs and issue in the face of the storm. Fifteen or twenty minutes later, emerging from between the shell-bursts which shovelled in the trenches, he might, if he lived, tumble exhausted, strained almost to speechlessness, down the stairs of some other headquarters to deliver his message, and then quietly curl himself up in the corner like a dog until he was called upon to return with another communication. Along the same routes, twice daily, from the regimental cookers went the parties—usually of the reserve battalion in each brigade—carrying food, and at various times (but especially from dusk to dawn) the working parties of engineers and pioneers for making or repairing trenches. The most comfortable time for these activities was always from dawn till about 7 o'clock, when the morning mist often veiled the battlefield and the guns of both sides almost ceased to fire, either because their ammunition allowance had been exceeded and not replenished, or because the gunners were exhausted. All this, and the continuous tension and horror of that battlefield, the reader's imagination must supply.

But stress must be laid upon certain features peculiar to the new phase. First, the front of advance was confined to the summit and western slope of the ridge, the right flank resting almost continuously on a line of old German gun-positions, dating from the time when the enemy's artillery was placed just behind the crest of the Second Line Ridge. The frontage of the attacks was therefore even narrower than before, the operations being undertaken in some cases by one or two battalions, in others by single weak brigades. As these drove towards the hinterland of Thiepval, the bombardments, both British and German, which were concentrated on this narrow area, so changed the land that the ridge and

its valleys resembled one long ploughed field. An immediate result was that the perplexed troops and their commanders frequently found it impossible to determine their position even in the day-time, while at night—especially in barrage—reliefs, and parties of carriers or workers, sometimes became totally lost. As the salient extended itself northwards, the communications reaching far back along the summit through



Pozieres or to Mash Valley were rendered more visible and dangerous, until, when the dip in front of Mouquet Farm was attained, it became impossible on the left to maintain any communication at all. For days together the artillery, especially on the northern front, had to work without telephone lines, since none could be maintained unbroken, and, like the infantry, it had to depend upon messages carried by runners, who under these dreadful conditions took several hours to reach brigade headquarters. Accurate ranging was therefore exceedingly difficult. On the other hand the German artillery observers could now detect from some distance any movement along the ridge by day, and this period also saw the beginning of a very marked German



effort to regain a place in the air.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the main British thrust—that against Guillemont and Ginchy—though five times repeated between August 8th and 21st, only once met with success. Practically the only other movement on the battlefield was that of the attempts of the III and XV Corps to gain parts of the Switch and Intermediate Trenches, and the continuous butting along Pozières Ridge towards Mouquet Farm. The result was that the German artillery, constantly warned of projected attacks—real and imaginary—was at liberty to pound the Anzac line from three sides with batteries in all the surrounding area, while British and Australian artillery, wrongly ranged or misinformed as to position, not infrequently fired into it from the rear.<sup>4</sup> The enemy discovered, after the advance had been in progress for a day or two, that Mouquet Farm was to be the objective of every attack. Consequently the troops launched in assault from the narrow point of the salient were the target of expectant enemy machine-gunners in front and flank, who simply fired through the barrage which was not wide or deep enough to stifle them. In other words, the attempt to render the Thiepval salient untenable by “methodically” driving a British salient past its rear resulted in fighting more difficult and expensive for the attacking British—whose defences and communications had daily to be improvised and crowded with attacking troops—than for the defending Germans, whose task required less labour, less movement, and fewer troops. To mitigate these conditions, from August 6th onwards General White urged that the flank of the advance must be deliberately expanded eastwards, so as to give more room. Accordingly, in almost every advance, the right flank battalion was charged with this main duty.

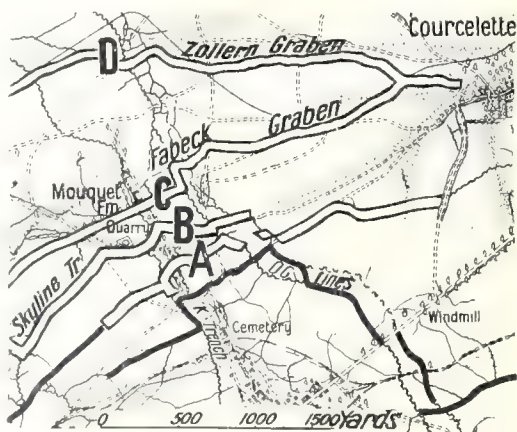
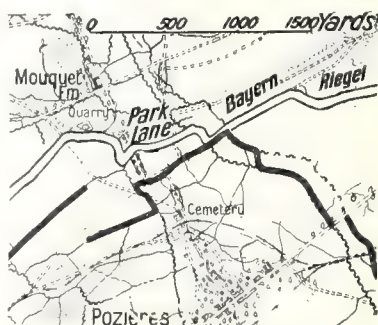
<sup>3</sup> On Aug. 8 three German aeroplanes were over the Anzac area; on Aug. 11 two, flying low; on the 12th two, one of which was brought down; on the 15th a German aeroplane, flying low, fired with its machine-gun at a battery in Mash Valley. On the 16th two were over; on the 17th six German balloons were visible, and a German aeroplane was brought down at Pozières after a long fight with a British machine. On the 21st, at 9.15 a.m., six German aeroplanes flew over the back area. They dropped seven bombs on the waggon-lines of the 7th Battery, A.F.A., in Bécourt Wood. Nine men were thereby killed and Lieutenant H. E. Moody (of Yorketown, S. Aust.) and 38 others wounded. Fifteen horses were killed and 29 wounded. Three German aeroplanes were over the lines in the afternoon, and seven balloons were visible. This activity was, however, slight, compared with that of the British air force.

<sup>4</sup> The same thing was observed to happen to the Germans on the windmill crest, and in such circumstances was almost inevitable.

Farther south, whatever brigade happened to be holding the O.G. Lines east of Pozières was given a similar task, to be carried out—except on one occasion—simply by sapping and entrenching. The eastern side of the salient was thus, during the month occupied by the northern advance, practically stationary. The enemy, however, constantly expected attack here; and the XIX (Saxon) Corps, which about August 10th relieved von Boehn's, being more than usually "nervy," was prone after slight provocation to turn on a powerful artillery. Consequently the bombardment of the O.G. Lines and of Pozières, though not so unrelenting as before, continued to be severe, and often intense.

The first steps in the northward advance were taken before the Germans had been given time to recover from the loss of the O.G. Lines on Pozières heights. As has been stated, the thrust of August 4th broke not only the then existing German front (the O.G. Lines) but also the switch behind them—the Bayern Riegel—at the end which connected with Park Lane (Gierich Weg).

The full effect of this procedure on the enemy's tactics was not realised, but it was rightly hoped that, when once Park Lane was passed, a prompt advance by the Australians would meet no strongly organised defence line short of Mouquet Farm, but only nests in the northward-running O.G. and "K" Trenches and in odd lengths of communication trench incidental to that system. As is shown in the marginal sketch, only one intermediate line (marked



"B," roughly an extension of Skyline Trench) formed an important barrier. The first really continuous switch was the Mouquet Farm-Fabeck Graben line (marked "C"); another ("D") ran through the Zollern Redoubt half-a-mile beyond. The German front line, Park Lane ("A"), ran across the highest part of the ridge north of Pozières. The next line ("B" in the sketch) passed through a little valley near the "Quarry" (a large chalk-pit shaped like a horse-shoe, open towards the Australians), and thence crossed the ridge and dipped into a valley on the eastern side. The western half of line "C," including Mouquet Farm, lay just beyond the summit of the next small knuckle,<sup>5</sup> which obscured the Farm to anyone approaching from the direction of the Australians, except when they were either within a hundred yards of it or on higher ground to the south-east. All that the corps intelligence officers knew of the Farm at the beginning of the advance was that it had been the large homestead of a well-to-do farmer;<sup>6</sup> that the main building had lain at the far end of the courtyard and contained two cellars; and that the dairy at the near end had contained five. The only trace to be seen of it from the Australian position on August 7th was a broken beam or two protruding from a patch of white cement just beyond the ploughed horizon half-a-mile north-east of Brind's Road.

An accurate account of the confused fighting by which this goal was approached—the stages being marked by shattered lengths of disconnected trenches in an area almost destitute of landmarks—is only possible by means of frequent reference to sketch-maps. In the instructions drawn up by General White for General Cox (4th Division) on August 6th, the lines marked "A" and "B" on the last marginal map were suggested as successive objectives, and of these Cox chose for his first stage "A" (Park Lane). As, however, the task of pushing along "K" Trench was part of the 12th (British) Division's duty, that division, besides completing

<sup>5</sup> In the British maps the valley south of Mouquet Farm, containing the "Quarry," was not shown. Examination of a captured German map, however, caused this error to be discovered in time and corrected in British maps issued about the beginning of August.

<sup>6</sup> M. Gonse, the owner of several farms, had let this one to a Fleming, M. Vanderdriessche. The eastern side of the courtyard had been burnt in 1914, leaving only three sides standing, of which the northern and southern had since become mere heaps of rubble, while the western had disappeared. In the centre of the courtyard was a large underground cistern.



the capture of Ration Trench (Fifth Avenue), was to attack "Point 78" (the junction of "K" Trench and Park Lane), the capture of which was essential to success. Attempts by the British at that point had repeatedly been swept away by machine-guns difficult to locate but believed by some to be beside the tree-stumps along the cutting of the road to Mouquet Farm. In a conference at General Cox's headquarters during the morning of the 8th the plans were thrashed out, Colonel Cannan of the 15th (Queensland and Tasmania) Battalion, which would carry out the Australian part, and the commander of the 7th Suffolk, which would attack Point 78, being present.<sup>7</sup> The whole area, including Point 78, had for two days been heavily shelled. The assault was to be made at 9.20 p.m., and would be covered by a particularly thorough bombardment. Besides the ordinary barrage of field-guns on the German front line, the artilleries of the 25th and 49th Divisions (II Corps), which were free to assist, would barrage respectively the second and third lines of German trenches already referred to;<sup>8</sup> two batteries of French field-guns attached to the II Corps would drench The Quarry with gas-shell; two others would sweep the exits from Courcelette. The heavy howitzers would pound Mouquet Farm and the adjacent trenches, the Anzac batteries having first joined in the three-minutes' barrage laid by the field-guns on the enemy's front line. The medium and light trench mortars would also join in. The main barrage of field-guns would be provided by six brigades of the Anzac Corps,<sup>9</sup> now including two from the Lahore Division's artillery, which accompanied the 4th Australian Division and had on the previous day relieved a brigade of the 1st Division,<sup>10</sup> till then still in the line. In order to deceive the enemy, while four brigades barraged the front of attack, two would lay a similar barrage along the whole eastern front of the corps.<sup>11</sup> As the enemy was suspected of stationing machine-gun posts in

<sup>7</sup> There were also present the commanders of both divisions with their artillery commanders and the two brigadiers concerned.

<sup>8</sup> See p. 732.

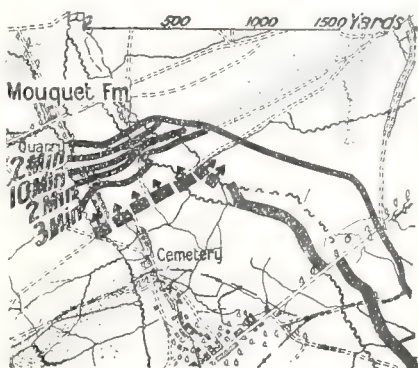
<sup>9</sup> The 4th, 5th, 6th, and 22nd of the 2nd Australian Division, and the 11th and 18th of the Lahore Division. The 4th Division's artillery had been left at Armentières.

<sup>10</sup> The 3rd A.F.A. Brigade.

<sup>11</sup> To cause the enemy to believe that the advance would be towards Courcelette the "Bayern Graben" (on and near Brind's Road, towards Courcelette) also had been bombarded. This proceeding was thorough, 360 heavy shells being fired at the trench on the morning of the 8th and 250 in the afternoon.



irregular positions behind his front line, the field-guns, after bombarding the front line, would increase their range by short stages,<sup>12</sup> the barrage thus sweeping the area as with the stroke of a broom. The troops for the attack had already been in the line for two rather feverish days; but the careful methods of the new brigadier, General Brand, were already telling. Hot meals were being regularly carried through to the front-line garrison, a reserve of 250 tins of water was kept at the cemetery, and arrangements were being made to sell canteen goods in the actual front line. The spirits of the men were correspondingly high.<sup>13</sup>



*Consecutive positions of field artillery barrage (medium black lines) and duration of each stage.*

The attack of the 15th Battalion succeeded. The trench which it was assaulting was 200 yards distant and had for ten days been the German front line. It had been defended with wire, but this had been sufficiently cut. The 15th advanced in three waves, all four companies in line, adopting the tactics already practised by the 4th Brigade in the back area. In spite of the barrage they were met, as they started, by heavy fire, by which one officer, Captain

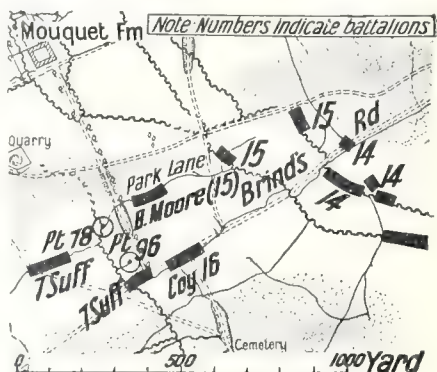
<sup>12</sup> The same method had been adopted on Aug. 4. The barrage was thus a "creeping" one, but the infantry were not required to follow it up as they did in later fights.

<sup>13</sup> In this respect Brand carried on the traditions of Monash. A diary of Aug. 8 states: "Battalions in O.G.2 were able to get tinned fruit and canteen stuff in front line at midday to-day—900 francs worth of stuff: 3 cases fruit, 3 cases sausages, 4 cases cakes, tobacco, biscuits, *café au lait* sold to companies on spot, money coming back." The 13th Battalion was then carrying for the 14th and 15th, sending a party of an officer and 80 men to each battalion, morning and evening, but changing the parties each day. The morning party, starting at 5 a.m., carried breakfast and dinner (dry ration), and the evening party tea. In spite of a fair number of casualties they had never, so far, been more than five minutes late, and had spilt only two dixies. Men from the front line showed themselves exceedingly well pleased with this service. "Gaw's truth!" said one, "the men that brings it up is as good as the men in the line!" "All this," comments the diarist, "seems to me splendid." Such praise should, of course, be shared by the organisation of the British Expeditionary Force Canteens and of the Q.M.G.'s Department in France and at the War Office, which rendered such achievements possible.

Brettingham-Moore,<sup>14</sup> was wounded. Moreover, by reason of excitement or want of instruction, or possibly through some battery being late in lifting its fire, they ran into their own barrage, Lieutenant Plane<sup>15</sup> being terribly hit as they reached the objective. On the left, where the British were, three or four enemy machine-guns were then firing; but on the rest of the front the Germans were taken by surprise. Some were shot down or bayoneted almost before they thought of defending themselves; the rest ran, Brettingham-Moore following those on the left and shooting one after another with his revolver. Having passed a trench containing a number of the enemy who waved a white rag, he caught a fleeing German and induced him to tell them that they would be spared if they surrendered. Thus, with only the wounded Plane and about thirty other Australians, he found himself in possession of the left half of Park Lane and twenty-three prisoners.

The two centre companies appear to have gone too far, but cleared their objective of Germans. The right quickly reported itself in its objective. Left and right were out of touch with each other, but their patrols, examining parts of the trenches between, found them empty except for the dead and wounded of the enemy.<sup>16</sup> Men of the centre companies were eventually collected and set to dig out the two O.G. trenches running back to the rear.

By 10.30 Colonel Cannan knew that his flanking companies had succeeded. On the left, however, where the British were operating, the fire of small arms could still be heard, and shortly before midnight Cannan received a message from



*Position as reported about midnight.*

<sup>14</sup> Capt. H. M. Brettingham-Moore, D.S.O.; 15th Bn. Law student; of Hobart; b. India, 29 Nov., 1890.

<sup>15</sup> Capt. A. A. Plane, 15th Bn. Insurance inspector; of Townsville, Q'land; b. Brunswick, Vic., 25 Dec., 1891.

<sup>16</sup> A heap of men of the 23rd Battalion killed on July 29 was also seen.

Captain Harwood of the 16th, whose company had moved to the old front line on that flank, that the enemy still held Point 78. Patrols and bombers also found that the short intermediate trench to Point 96 was in German hands. This knot of trenches had during the previous day been the centre of a fierce local struggle, of which particulars, obtained from German sources, are given below.<sup>17</sup> Thus the conditions in which the Suffolks had to attack were more difficult than the Australians realised. The attacking British also probably knew that two previous assaults on these machine-guns had been mown down.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, according to an eye-witness,<sup>19</sup> they advanced simultaneously with the Australians, and one or two on the right reached the objective near Brettingham-Moore, but the centre and left were again swept down by machine-gun fire. The left of the 15th was thus "in the air," and, upon hearing of this, Cannan at 12.45 sent to the commander of the Suffolk a request that another endeavour should be made to connect with the Australians in the captured Park Lane. The reply was that the attempt would be made by bombing up Ration Trench. The English colonel afterwards reported that this thrust also had failed to reach 78, but had approached it closely, and urged that the Australians should hold on in Park Lane, contending that the Germans between them were trapped. German accounts afford some evidence that the situation of these Germans was indeed precarious, but hardly so precarious as Brettingham-Moore's would have been after daylight, with no communication to his rear and active machine-guns on his flank. Cannan accordingly sent Moore a message to withdraw. The latter had meanwhile discovered that a partly sunken road on his right offered a moderately safe avenue of communication in the dark.<sup>20</sup> He had thus sent back messengers, and in answer to his request for reinforcement received a handful of bombers of the 16th under Lieutenant Wadge.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, though himself thrice wounded, he

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<sup>17</sup> P. 739.

<sup>18</sup> On July 28/29 and August 4/5.

<sup>19</sup> Lieut. Wadge, 16th Bn., A.I.F.

<sup>20</sup> The official reports state that a communication trench was eventually dug beside the road. Actually the digging was begun but not finished.

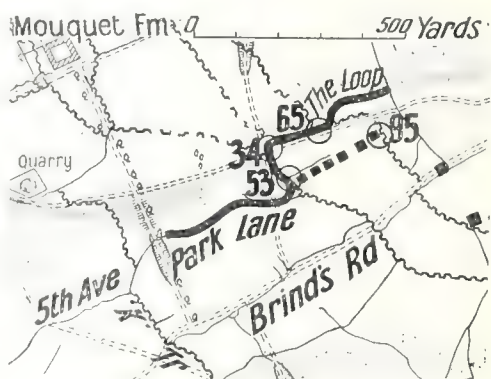
<sup>21</sup> Twenty were sent, but only six had got through before the order to withdraw arrived. (Capt. F. Wadge, M.C.; 16th Bn. Accountant; b. Templecombe, Somerset, Eng., 21 April, 1888.)

ignored Cannan's first message to retire. At day-break, however, he received another, with which he complied, and, making his prisoners carry Lieutenant Plane and the other wounded, brought out the whole of his party with its Lewis guns and prisoners along the sunken road.<sup>22</sup>

So, by the morning, only half the objective was held, and that only by parties which were endeavouring to find touch with one another by bombing from different parts of the trenches. The position reached on the right was reported to be that which is

marked by a dotted line in the marginal sketch. The 13th Battalion, however, which two days later took over the position from the 15th, eventually identified the line with the one marked in dense black.<sup>23</sup>

It is probable that this identification was correct, and that the centre



companies of the 15th had crossed Trench 53-95 without observing it and had reached 34-65 and The Loop—a trench newly dug by the Germans in their effort to bridge the gap created on August 4th. This line was beyond the objective; and, when on August 9th the bombardment preparatory to a new attack was begun, the 15th there found itself under the shells of its own artillery and withdrew, intending to reoccupy the position as soon as the barrage ceased.

On the German side the British bombardment had made the reserve trenches about Mouquet Farm practically untenable, and some of the supporting troops were accordingly withdrawn half-a-mile, to Zollern Redoubt. The front line, which also had been badly damaged, was held by tired troops. The previous night parts of the 11th

<sup>22</sup> The Germans made no counter-attack, though a hedge along a road (on the right) was mistaken for Germans in the early morning. In the subsequent retirement only one man was wounded—just as the party reached the Australian trench.

<sup>23</sup> During its next tour, a fortnight later, the 13th appears to have recognised that the trenches reached in its first tour were more advanced than had been realised at the time. There was another trench called "The Loop" in the area of the III Corps.

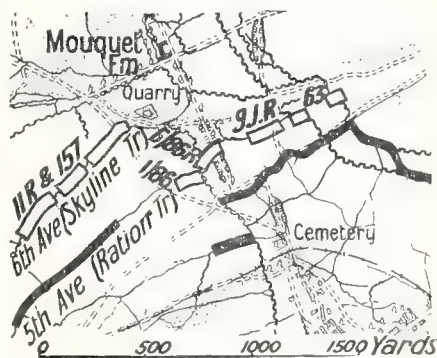


R.I.R. and of the III/157th I.R. holding Skyline Trench (Sixth Avenue) had been ordered to retake Ration Trench (Fifth Avenue) from the British. The 9th Reserve Jäger, which was to co-operate by seizing the 400 yards of that trench adjoining "K" Trench, had brought up for this purpose the 1st company 86th R.I.R. (under Lieutenant Thalemann), with which it had been reinforced. This company, though newly-joined reinforcements had increased its strength to 181, had been quite unprepared for the operation, most of the men being worn out and the supply of food and water insufficient. Nevertheless, after ten minutes' artillery preparation, two sections with a *flammenwerfer* had in the early hours of the 8th attacked the English barricade in "K" Trench. A German account<sup>24</sup> states that the British (12th Division) fought bravely, but that a frontal attack by a few sections presently gave the Germans the trench. Farther west, however, where the 157th and 11th should have advanced, no movement was seen; and the British, counter-attacking at 3 a.m., drove out the 1st company of the 86th. At 3.45 the same company attacked again, and this time gained and consolidated 400 yards of Ration Trench. As the 157th and 11th again failed,<sup>25</sup> the company commander of the 86th withdrew from half the captured sector, but retained 150 yards. On its left the curved length of Park Lane on either side of the road-cutting was held by the 6th company of the 86th, which with several of the regimental machine-guns had been there since August 7.

Such had been the position when the British bombardment on the afternoon of August 8 began. The loss which it inflicted in Ration Trench was so great that Thalemann reported that, if it continued, he could not hold on. The reply received an hour later from battalion headquarters (Zollern Redoubt) was that he must hold to the last man. He was assured that two batteries of heavy howitzers were being turned on to suppress

the British trench mortars, of which he especially complained, but his men could not see a single German shell burst near the position intended. When the bombardment was most intense, a German shell fell on the barricade which the Germans were holding in "K" Trench. By the time of the attack Thalemann had with him (according to the regimental history) only three men, and these were lightly wounded. By midnight the British had again advanced in Ration Trench.

Meanwhile the Australians had attacked Park Lane. This was held by part of the 9th Jäger Reserve Regiment, with the I/63rd



<sup>24</sup> *History of the 86th R.I.R.*, pp. 148-9.

<sup>25</sup> *The History of the 157th I.R.* (p. 34) says that artillery and machine-gun fire rendered the attack abortive.

on their left (O.G. Lines) and the 6th company 86th on their right, about the road-cutting. The 63rd are said to have given way, and about fifty Australians came on the 3rd company of the Jäger "from the rear." According to the history of that regiment, they were stopped by Vizfeldwebel Reh and a bomb-fight was waged during the night. At 1.30 a.m., as the Australians were attacking from several directions and bombs were running short, Lieutenant Flos, after sending away the wounded and a machine-gun, gave the order to retire, leaving a number of his men prisoners.<sup>26</sup>

The 86th also, near the road-cutting, were attacked by the Australians from flank or rear, and its fire was withheld through some of the Schleswig-Holsteiners in mistake calling out that the approaching troops were Germans. According to their account the attackers thus got in on both sides of the cutting, and the 86th—consisting largely of new reinforcements—ran wildly back, crying "we are surrounded: Tommy's coming!" They began to throw hand grenades in all directions to the great peril of their own side, until a senior subaltern named Holm, threatening them with his pistol, drove them back to their posts. According to the regimental historian they counter-attacked in the morning, supported by trench-mortar fire; opposition was "tough," but they eventually recaptured the trench, two machine-guns, and several "Englishmen." (No incident at all similar to this can be recognised in the British or Australian records.) The 6th company had then been reduced to 40, and the 1st (with Lieutenant Thalemann) to 12.

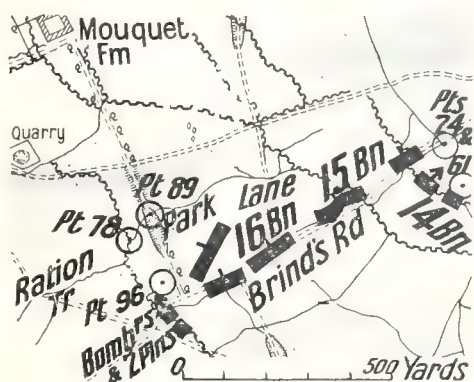
The German higher staff thought, as usual, that the front of attack was much wider than was actually the case, being probably deceived by the extension of the barrage to the windmill.

On the Australian side a fresh attack had been ordered for the following night. Recognising that it was inadvisable to entrust the advance up "K" Trench to any other division than that which was making the main advance along the ridge, General Gough arranged that the 4th Australian Division should take over this responsibility, the boundary between the I Anzac and II Corps being henceforth the Pozières-Thiepval road.<sup>27</sup> The task of seizing Point 78 thus fell to the 16th Australian Battalion, whose advanced company in "K" Trench had provided the reserve for the previous night's operation. The commander of the 16th, Lieutenant-Colonel Drake Brockman, reconnoitring in the front line, and seeing the dead of the Suffolk Battalion lying thickly before the German machine-gun posts in Point 78 and the cutting, decided not to rush those points from the front, as the divisional commander suggested, but obliquely. The three

<sup>26</sup> The Australians captured 18 men of the 9th Jäger Reserve Regiment, and 4 of the 86th.

<sup>27</sup> This change had been decided upon before the attack of Aug. 8.

companies of the 16th in the back trenches near La Boisselle did not move up until 7 p.m., but during the day General Brand visited the front, and, in conference with Drake Brockman, Cannan, an officer of the 7th Suffolk,<sup>28</sup> and the company commanders of the 16th, worked out the arrangements. All the officers and senior N.C.O's of the 16th studied from the front trenches the ground over which they were to attack. The small advanced trench to 96 and "K" Trench were to be dealt with by two platoons and by the bombers of the 16th under Lieutenant Wilton.<sup>29</sup> The bombardment would be practically a repetition of that of the previous night, but the curved trench between 78 and 89 and the adjacent road-cutting, supposed to contain the machine-guns which had wrecked so many previous attempts, received more attention than other points.



The troops made the rush at midnight after five minutes' intense bombardment. The devices used in practice by the 4th Brigade were again followed, the scouts even directing the flanks of the several companies by placing in No-Man's Land electric torches, shaded from the enemy by being embedded in scooped-out earth, with a different-coloured light for each company. The operation was a complete and almost bloodless success; the 16th seized all its objectives, capturing the German machine-guns and their crews,<sup>30</sup> and the 15th reoccupied the position evacuated the previous morning, clearing out the few Germans who had managed to trickle back thither. On the extreme right the 14th reoccupied

<sup>28</sup> It was eventually decided that the Suffolk should not attack that night, but merely join up their line if the Australians succeeded.

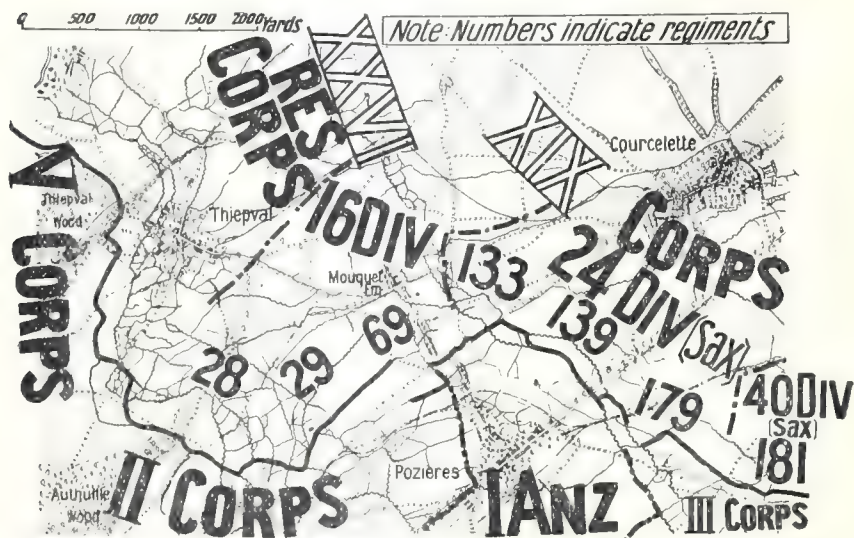
<sup>29</sup> Capt. V. B. Wilton, M.C.; 16th Bn. Bank official; of Korumburra and Mount Macedon, Vic.; b. Hawthorn, Vic., 29 Sept., 1894.

<sup>30</sup> Three machine-guns and a *flammenwerfer* appear to have been taken near Point 78 and about 30 prisoners.



two posts (61 and 24) which, in pursuance of the policy of "making room" eastwards, it had dug on the night of the 8th.

This attack had found the German front held by troops of a new division, the 16th (raised in the Rhine Province), which had just arrived from near Soissons and relieved the exhausted 117th Division and 9th Jäger Reserve Regiment north and north-west of Pozières.<sup>31</sup> At the same time the IX Reserve Corps (from north-east of Pozières to beyond High Wood) was handing over to the XIX—a Saxon formation just brought down from opposite II Anzac at Armentières. The Saxon troops, though raised in industrial districts and therefore usually accounted inferior in stamina and fighting power, were at this time well rested, and their spirit was said to be good. The relieving troops became responsible for the section indicated in the sketch.



An order of the 16th Division said:

Put into the line at the most decisive spot, the division will once again show its proved offensive spirit . . . counter-attacking at once if elements of trench fall into the hands of the enemy.

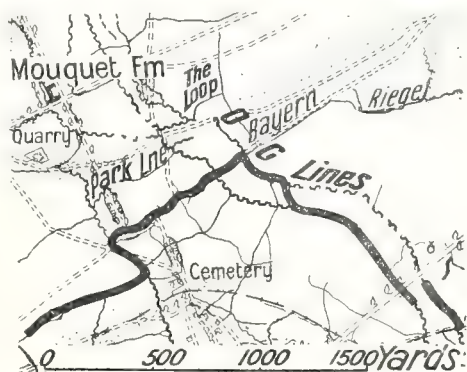
On August 9, just before handing over, General von Boehn, the withdrawing corps commander, telephoned to the headquarters of the Second German Army that in his opinion the British were determined to force a break-through in the Pozières sector, and he asked for more artillery—5.9-inch howitzers and heavier. At the same time he informed the 18th Reserve and 117th Divisions, east and north of Pozières, that it was absolutely essential to maintain a hold upon

<sup>31</sup> The 117th Division, being worn out, was next sent to the Russian front.



the Bayern Riegel (the trench running near and along Brind's Road to the O.G. Lines). The western end of this trench and the east of Park Lane had, as a matter of fact, already been lost, as well as the new connecting trench (the Loop<sup>32</sup>) by which the 63rd Regiment had attempted to bridge the gap. Farther south, near Munster Alley, a new switch was also begun, facing the windmill.

The troops of the incoming Rhineland Division (the 16th) had taken over the northern front immediately after the Australian attack of the 8th. About the same time the 133rd (Saxon) Regiment came in on the eastern front, the boundary between the two in the firing line being in the O.G. Lines about The Loop. Late in the afternoon of the 8th Australians had seen troops moving towards Mouquet Farm. In that area the 69th was heavily shelled during the relief; nor did the 133rd escape. "The relief," wrote one of its officers, "was incredible." The route—by Ligny, Warlencourt, Pys, Courcellette—was very dangerous, though most of the British heavy shells failed to explode. "The men we relieved had no notion where the enemy was, how far off he was, or if any of our own troops were in front of us. We got no idea of our supposed position until 6 o'clock this evening (August 10). . . . The English are (at) 400 metres, the windmill over the hill. . . ."



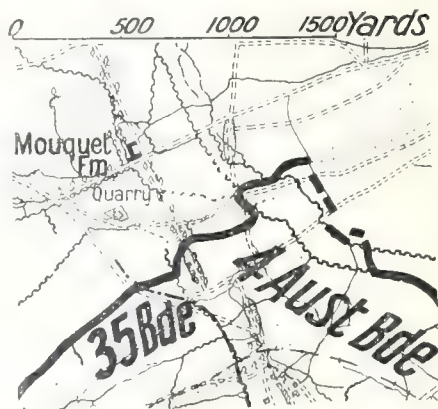
The trench attacked by the 15th and 16th Australian Battalions was thus held on the 9th by the 2nd and 3rd companies of the 1/69th I.R. of the 16th Division. This battalion lost so heavily during the relief and the attack (in which the Australians captured 46 of its men) that it is said to have been withdrawn after twenty-four hours.<sup>33</sup> The available German records make no mention of this night's attack, possibly because it was accepted that Park Lane had virtually been lost the night before. The capture of The Loop and its connections re-opened the gap between the German divisions north and east of Pozières, and, though they constantly tried to bridge it, they were prevented by the continual bombardment.

At dawn on August 10th the northern flank of the Australian line lay just over the skyline north of Pozières, astride of the ridge, with a valley ahead of its left and left-centre and another on its extreme right. For the first time since

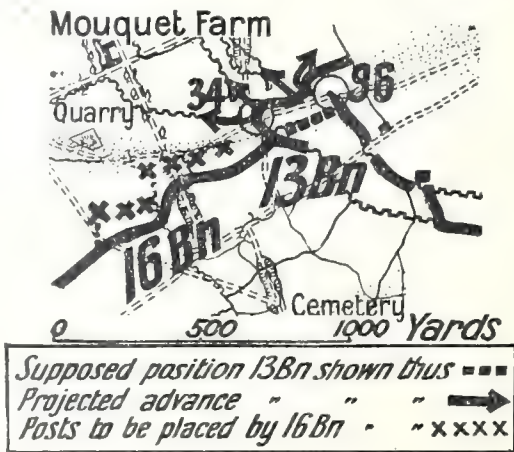
<sup>32</sup> See p. 738.

<sup>33</sup> A statement made by men subsequently captured. They said that the 3rd company had "murderous" losses by artillery fire, including 50 suffered during the relief.

the Australians entered the Battle of the Somme a little rain was falling, but hardly enough to turn the crater-field to mud. The German shelling was scattered and intermittent until 4 p.m., when it descended heavily on the front line and communications<sup>34</sup> as far back as Sausage Valley. During the afternoon and evening the 13th Battalion, which was comparatively fresh, relieved the 15th.<sup>35</sup> Neither battalion suffered heavily, the probable reason being partly that their front line was farther ahead than the enemy realised, and partly that this shelling was preparing the way for a projected counter-attack farther west, against the 16th Battalion and the British.



The commander of the 4th Australian Division did not wait for any such developments, but ordered the 13th and 16th to make at once what progress they could while the enemy's line was still unsettled. The formal second stage of the advance towards Mouquet Farm was not to be undertaken for several nights, but in the meantime the 13th was to seize the "strong trench 34-96," which the divisional staff believed to be next



<sup>34</sup> For the German account see p. 746.

<sup>35</sup> In a back corner of the dugout in which the 13th had its headquarters one of the signallers discovered several Germans of the II/162 I.R. who had remained hidden there since the capture of the O.G. Lines on August 4.

ahead of them. In reality, this appears to have been the trench captured in the last night's attack and now garrisoned.<sup>36</sup> To assist the 13th to capture it, trench 34-96 was to be bombarded from 8 to 9 p.m. by heavy artillery. Fortunately the artillery, requiring a prudent margin, asked that the garrison should be brought back at least 200 yards during the bombardment. Trench 34-96 was to be taken in the early morning after a bombardment lasting from 1 to 1.3 a.m., and bombing parties were to be pushed forward (in the manner shown by arrows in the sketch) and barricades established. The 16th Battalion was to advance independently to the positions marked with crosses, and to dig a communication trench from Ration Trench to the left of this new line.

The 13th knew that there was danger of their line being shelled by its own guns; two hours before the barrage was due to fall Captain Pulling,<sup>37</sup> who throughout commanded its front line, was informed by Colonel Tilney that the artillery had been unable to register and was therefore shooting merely according to the map. He was advised, if the front-line trench afforded enough protection from its shells, to keep the waves under cover there until the barrage lifted; after conferring with Captain Barton,<sup>38</sup> whose company together with his own had been entrusted with the attack, Pulling decided to decrease the distance between the waves. They appear to have started well, but, whether because the night was foggy or through over-keenness, went farther than they were intended to go even in the subsequent bomb-enterprise. Swinging to the left, they occupied O.G.2 up to the point where it crossed a road-cutting 400 yards east of Mouquet Farm. On the left patrols pushed up O.G.1 and the trench towards Point 55, but contented themselves with a short length of both trenches, since the nearer part of each had been practically obliterated and the enemy was strongly posted farther on. The casualties of the 13th were slight, only some

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<sup>36</sup> This view is supported by examination of air-photographs.

<sup>37</sup> Maj. H. D. Pulling, M.C.; 13th Bn. University student; of North Sydney; b. Bowral, N.S.W., 12 April, 1894.

<sup>38</sup> Capt. F. M. Barton, 13th Bn. Law student; of Sydney; b. Gladesville, N.S.W., 11 Aug., 1893. Killed in action 11 Aug., 1916.

30 in all.<sup>39</sup> A few men were hit by their own barrage, into which the advance had thrust, but most by rifle or machine-gun fire from Germans on or in rear of the two flanks. Captain Barton, who moved along the right to reconnoitre, was never seen or heard of again. The 16th in "K" Trench reached the desired point (61), finding the trench practically obliterated, and also placed its posts more or less as ordered along the edge of the valley looking to The Quarry and the two trees.<sup>40</sup> The sites of the trenches actually dug and of those intended are shown in the marginal sketch. At dawn the advanced post of the 13th in the sunken road east of Mouquet Farm was counter-attacked by forty German bombers, who were driven off, leaving nearly a third of their number dead.



The bombardment by II Corps and I Anzac of Skyline Trench and those around Mouquet Farm on August 10 was so severe that the positions of the 29th and 69th (Rhineland) Regiments in Skyline Trench and of the 133rd (Saxon) in the Fabeck Graben (north-west of Mouquet Farm) were reported by the Germans to have been attacked at 2.45 that afternoon, and lost! Supported by the 69th, however, the 133rd "recovered" the whole of its lost sector. At 6.10 p.m. the 24th (Saxon) Division reported that it was being strongly attacked at about its junction with the 16th (S.W. of Mouquet Farm), and that an operation against its left (*i.e.*, Windmill-Munster Alley) was being prepared.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> These included no less than six officers, Captain Barton and Lieutenant A. N. McGown missing, and Lieutenants H. F. Murray, K. N. Patrick, R. H. Kell, and N. Wallach wounded. It was afterwards learnt that McGown had been wounded and picked up by the enemy as prisoner. (McGown belonged to Lane Cove, N.S.W.; Murray to Sydney; Patrick to Ashfield; Kell to Hunter's Hill and Merriwa; and Wallach to Sydney.)

<sup>40</sup> Usually known as the Three Trees; but there were standing at this time only the bare stems of two.

<sup>41</sup> It is possible that the group of forward saps then being dug by the 12th Brigade in front of O.G.2 had been detected. The German position beyond the windmill was also being frequently reconnoitred—a daylight visit by Lieutenant L. C. A. Craig (of Melbourne) of the 46th on this day located a German post at the fork of the Bapaume and Courcellette roads. Some of this activity may have been remarked.



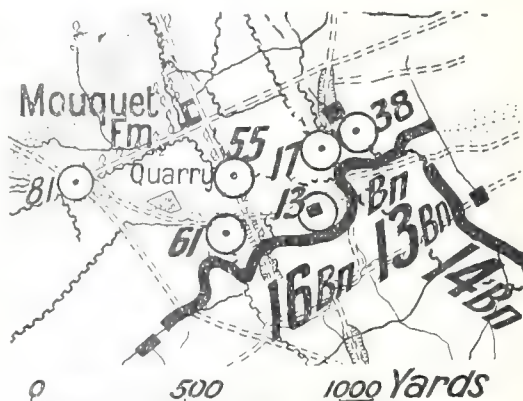
The measures inaugurated by the newly-arrived corps to meet these imaginary attacks were remarkable. The 24th Division sent its reserve battalion to Courcelette to counter-attack under the orders of the 133rd Regiment, and asked XIX Corps headquarters for the II/179th as a fresh reserve. The artillery reported that the Australians were in "the sunken road in Süd V" (*i.e.* the sunken road in sector "South No. 5" of their lines, the position reached by the 13th Australian Battalion), and two batteries of heavy howitzers were ordered to fire at it, while all the heavy artillery of the 16th Division and nine heavy batteries of neighbouring corps were turned upon Fourth Avenue and Park Lane and barraged the north-western part of Pozières. ("Our artillery," wrote a Saxon officer that night, "is firing incessantly, the enemy but little. The ceaseless roar of the guns is driving me mad.") The XIX Corps placed two reserve battalions (the II/179th and I/134th) at the disposal of the 24th Division, while one (the II/68th) was given to the 16th. At 8 o'clock the 133rd (Saxon) reported that it had counter-attacked from the Fabeck Graben—the 69th (Rhineland), however, refusing to co-operate—and had penetrated as far as the sunken road in "Süd V," where it was checked, receiving heavy loss by fire from a sandbag emplacement. (The times given in this account are impossible to reconcile with those given by the Australians, who did not claim to have reached the sunken road until late that night.)

On the Australian side the front-line troops were not credited, even by commanders near the front, with having attained the junction of O.G.1 and the sunken road; even the headquarters of the 13th thought that its front lay on the objective. This mistake was not the fault of the British airmen who daily sought for the front line. The advanced troops were supposed to light flares at stated hours in order to indicate their positions to aeroplanes, and, to avoid giving the same information to the enemy, these flares were allowed to be burnt on the floor of the trenches or in craters. Even so, the troops were often shy of exhibiting them; and—partly for this reason, partly through officers, or others who carried flares, being hit—the co-operation of the Australian infantry with aeroplanes was at this stage so bad that the airmen, risking their lives by low flying, were often unable to make certain whether the posts seen were in all cases the foremost ones.

For the next night, August 11th, the plan was that both 13th and 16th should endeavour, without any special artillery programme, to continue their progress by occupying certain points ahead. Preparations for the next formal advance—which was fixed for the night after that—had now

begun,<sup>42</sup> but a projected barrage shortly after dark was cancelled and orders were issued that the ordinary night-firing should be stopped or lengthened at the request of the brigades, so as to permit their troops to advance. General Cox desired that parties should bomb towards Points 38, 17, 55, and 61 (of which at least Point 38 was already behind the lines), and a trench was to be dug parallel to the next night's objective (Quarry-81) so that it could be conveniently attacked.

But the position now attained by the left flank lay on a slope dipping into a valley-head, on the other side of which, at The Quarry and at positions like 55, indistinguishable in that plough-field, were the enemy's front posts. These Germans were not 300 yards away, and all work and movement were directly under their eyes and those of artillery observers on more distant ridges. As soon as daylight arrived, the German artillery threw on the whole of this area another heavy bombardment, which was particularly severe and accurate upon the new positions of the 16th Battalion and on Fifth Avenue (Ration Trench). At noon this bombardment intensified,<sup>43</sup> and, as it continued hour after hour, so many men were killed, wounded, or buried and "shell-shocked," that the garrisons in these positions were either totally withdrawn to Brind's Road or reduced by half, old German dugouts being used, where available, to shelter those who remained. At 2.30 two German aeroplanes flew



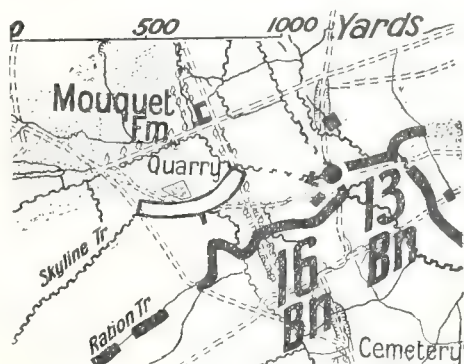
<sup>42</sup> The artillery preparation included:

Demolition bombardments (one hour each)	..	August 11	11.30 a.m.
		"	7.15 p.m.
		August 12	1.45 p.m.
		"	5.30 p.m.
Surprise practice bombardments (about 20 minutes each)	..	August 10	10 p.m.
		August 11	3.30 a.m.
		August 12	3.15 a.m.

<sup>43</sup> A severe bombardment also descended upon the O.G. Lines east of Pozières.

over Pozières, and about the same time those of the garrison remaining on guard observed numerous small columns, each of six to ten Germans in single file, emerging from the neighbourhood of Mouquet Farm, spreading fanwise, and advancing into the depression near The Quarry, where they sank into shell-holes and quickly formed a strong line. The German shelling increased, and the 13th and 16th, anticipating counter-attack, sent up

their reserve Lewis guns and reoccupied most of the posts which had temporarily been evacuated. At about 2.45 the German line began to advance across the valley. The Lewis gunners of the 13th, up in the shallow head of the depression, caught them with a deadly



enfilade; and, as they emerged near the top of the slope, those of the 16th, who throughout the tremendous shell-fire had been nursing their precious weapons under their tunics to preserve them from dust and débris, opened a withering fusillade. The spirits of the Australians rose instantly, and there broke out such a storm of rifle-fire that by a few minutes after 3 the enemy was shattered, seeking refuge in shell-holes and making back, where possible, to The Quarry. As the number gathering in that neighbourhood appeared to be large, Drake Brockman sent by pigeon a request for the heavy artillery to shell the place. Within twenty minutes the pigeon was in the loft at corps headquarters, the message had been telephoned to the batteries, and the heavies were turned upon valley and farm, scattering the enemy across the countryside.

No reference to this counter-attack appears in the available German records. Prisoners reported that two battalions had advanced from The Quarry and Mouquet Farm. Of the prisoners taken this day, two were from the 69th Regiment and seventeen from the 133rd. How many of these were taken after the attempted advance is not recorded, but it seems possible that the two regiments were co-operating.

The German guns continued very active throughout the night of the 11th, an intense barrage being thrown on the windmill and Tramway Trench and setting on fire the dump at the Chalk Pit.<sup>44</sup> The reply to the practice barrage at 3.15 a.m. was furious. The 16th Battalion suffered heavily. The carriage of water, supplies, and the wounded was sustained largely by the example of one man, Private Martin O'Meara, who four times went through the barrage with supplies, on one occasion taking with him a party, and who thereafter continued to bring out the wounded until all those of his battalion had been cleared.<sup>45</sup>



In spite of the bombardment and counter-attack the exploring operations laid down for that night were carried out both by the 16th and 13th. Colonel Drake Brockman reported next day:

No advantage in establishing post beyond 61, where we had strong point which was obliterated last night by shelling, but position is held by patrols. Great portion of trenches on left and communication trenches flattened out—casualties severe.

But the order to dig a "jumping-off" trench from 61 to 13<sup>46</sup> could not be carried out. The left company of the 13th in the extension of O.G.1 probed towards Point 55<sup>46</sup> but did not go far, the trench being almost unrecognisable. The right company already occupied part of the set objective, but reached on its right an artillery position which had been abandoned by the enemy and contained a dugout full of shells and artillery gear. In the early morning the men at or west of the sunken road in "Süd V"<sup>47</sup> discerned figures in motion

<sup>44</sup> The spectacle of bombs, rockets, and flares of all colours exploding in all directions hour after hour will not be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

<sup>45</sup> For this O'Meara was awarded the Victoria Cross. [Sgt. M. O'Meara, V.C. (No. 3970; 16th Bn.). Sleeper cutter; b. Lorrha, Co. Tipperary, Ireland, 1885.]

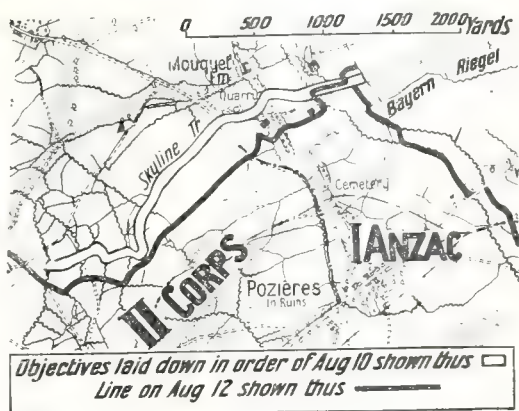
<sup>46</sup> See sketch on p. 748. The trenches to be dug are shown in the lower sketch on p. 744.

<sup>47</sup> See sketches on pp. 748 and 754.



about fifty yards away. Being uncertain who they were, the Australians let them come to within twenty yards, when the officer at the head of the approaching group threw a bomb.<sup>48</sup> He was immediately riddled with bullets; two Lewis guns on the edge of the sunken road opened fire, and both the German bombing-party, estimated at about 60 men, and a larger body—reported to be 250 strong in denser formation—which had appeared in support of it, were shattered. Fourteen of the enemy, apparently Saxons of the 133rd Regiment, were captured, and later in the morning numbers of German stretcher-bearers and a doctor (with whom the Australians conversed as he worked) were occupied for two hours in dressing and picking up the wounded.

The formal second stage in the advance of I Anzac and the II Corps to the line of Mouquet Farm was fixed for the following night (August 12th), the 12th British Division assaulting Skyline Trench and the knot of German works at its south-western end, and the 4th Australian Brigade attacking (according to the Reserve Army's order issued on August 10th) the enemy's supposed line south-east of Mouquet Farm, as shown in the marginal map. On the summit of the ridge, however, the Aus-



tralian line was already well beyond these objectives. The main task in the Australian area would therefore fall upon the left battalion, which must advance across the valley to The Quarry. But the unit holding that flank—the 16th—had been

<sup>48</sup> This bomb blew off the leg of Sgt. F. P. Brown of the 13th and wounded two brothers named Partridge. Another member of the same family, Pte. C. F. Partridge, belonging to the same battalion, was wounded two days later. (Brown was of Adelaide; the Partridge brothers of Macksville district, N.S.W.; and C. F. Partridge of Smithtown, N.S.W.)

strained to the utmost by bombardment, which still continued, and it was therefore hurriedly decided to lend to the 4th Brigade for the attack a battalion of the 13th Brigade—the 50th (South Australian)—which early that morning had been brought from the brickfield in rear of Albert to “Wire Trench” near La Boisselle. The 50th had just settled into Wire Trench, where it expected to remain for a day or two, when this order reached its commander. He accordingly hurried it forward to relieve the 16th. Shortly after noon its leading company reached Tom’s Cut, which had been partly demolished by the last night’s bombardment.<sup>49</sup> This movement on the horizon was probably seen by the enemy’s artillery observers, for a severe barrage now descended on the whole length of the communications. In Park Lane the 16th was met, almost exhausted, and the trench became packed with the greater part of the two battalions, three deep. The 16th gradually dribbled out, their officers simply telling them where to go, and the men finding their own way. At 7.30 p.m. the German barrage eased somewhat, though it did not cease. It was dark before the last company of the 50th got through, and the battalion had suffered considerable loss, especially of officers and N.C.O.’s.

It was not until 3 p.m. on this day that news reached the staff of the Second German Army that the western end of the Bayern Riegel had been lost. As the army was still determined to hold the Skyline Trench—Bayern Riegel line<sup>50</sup>—its chief of staff interviewed the staff of the XIX Corps and decided to order the 16th Division to counter-attack with *flammenwerfer*. While, however, these arrangements were in progress, the 24th (Saxon) Division having seen indications of attack, asked for artillery support north of the Bapaume



<sup>49</sup> The line of Tom’s Cut can be seen in the second barrage from the top of the marginal sketch. It ran from north of the Cemetery to the O.G. Lines.

<sup>50</sup> See sketch on p. 732.



54. REMAINS OF O.G.2 SOUTH OF THE MAIN ROAD

The view is northward. The buried stand of rifles (of which muzzles are visible in the hole) shows how this area had been obliterated.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. L11.  
Taken on 11th October, 1916.*





55. BRITISH AND GERMAN WOUNDED AT THE ADVANCED DRESSING STATION

*Inset:* Australian stretcher-bearers bringing in wounded under a white flag, 28th August, 1916 (*see also Vol. XII, plate 233*).

*British Official Photograph.*  
*Inset: Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. E4946.*



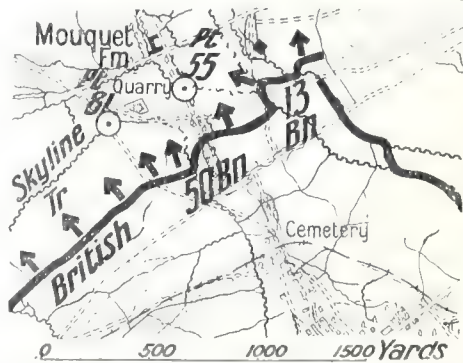
road. It was reported later that between 3.30 and 4.30 p.m. it had been twice attacked, the first assault being broken by the barrage before it was launched, and the second launched but repulsed. These "attacks" were undoubtedly the approach march of the 50th Australian Battalion. The diversion of the artillery to quell them, and the uncertainty of the position, seemed to have caused the plan of *flammenwerfer* attack by the 16th Division to be given up.

The attacks by I Anzac and II Corps were timed for 10.30 p.m. and the former was launched, not from the forward slope facing The Quarry, where the "jumping-off" trench was to have been dug the night before, but from Park Lane and Ration Trench. The operation orders reached the companies only at 7 p.m., and some of the forward platoon-commanders received merely vague verbal directions. Moreover, probably because the 13th Battalion was farther ahead than was recognised, the 50th did not get touch with it before the starting-hour arrived. The day had been one of activity along a large part of the Somme battle-front. Late in the afternoon the French north of the Somme and the British XIII Corps renewed the attempt, already so often repulsed, to seize the German second line near Maurepas and Guillemont. Farther north the III Corps with the 34th and 15th Divisions attacked at two different points the Intermediate Trench and the Switch Trench near Munster Alley. As the operation near Munster Alley would take place on the flank of the Australians, it had been timed for the same hour as their assault; the 12th Australian Brigade, still holding the front at the windmill, had been ordered to assist by manning a number of posts which had been dug in advance of that line.

Of these operations, that near Guillemont again failed, and Sir Douglas Haig, attributing this result largely to the staleness of the XIII Corps staff, decided to transfer to this flank the XIV Corps from the Reserve Army's front north of the Ancre. In the III Corps area also the assault of the 34th Division was broken down by the fire of German machine-guns in enfilade. But on the Australian flank the 15th (Scottish) Division forced its way along Munster Alley as far as the Switch, and finally secured the alley for the British. As before, the Australians "bought in" to the fighting in the alley, the 46th (Victorian) Battalion sending

its bombers and two machine-guns to help the 6th Cameron Highlanders. This was the first occasion on which Australians had fought beside troops of a Scottish division,<sup>51</sup> and the special qualities on each side appealed to the other. The quite remarkable friendship which ripened between the soldiers of the two nations—in spite of the fact that the Australians included a large mixture of Irish—might provide food for a student of national character.

The barrage covering the Australian advance towards Mouquet Farm was now provided mainly by the artillery of the Lahore Division, since, in this and most of the ensuing attacks, that of the II Corps was preoccupied with the bombardment of Skyline Trench and other objectives of its own troops. The three Lahore brigades were now all covering the northern front,<sup>52</sup> while the 4th and 22nd Brigades of Australian field artillery, as well as the 1st (brought in that day), covered the eastern front from near the sunken road in "Süd V" to the Bapaume road.<sup>53</sup> The barrage was again a "creeping" one,<sup>54</sup> and Australian accounts speak of it with admiration—"a continuous flash of shrapnel bursting almost over the men's foreheads." As a matter of fact, it must have lain a considerable distance ahead of the left battalion (the 50th), but, after the torture which they had experienced when coming in, the men were greatly cheered by the sight. The battalion advanced from Park Lane over the edge of the hill in one line almost 700 yards



<sup>51</sup> They had previously fought for a day or two beside individual Scottish battalions.

<sup>52</sup> Brig.-Gen. E. S. Hoare Nairne (of Henley-on-Thames, Eng.), their commander, had now taken charge of field artillery operations.

<sup>53</sup> The 34th Division's artillery (III Corps) was still responsible for the front south of the Bapaume road.

<sup>54</sup> With three "lifts," each of about fifty yards at two minutes' intervals. On the left, where—having a more distant objective—the II Corps was placing its first barrage half-way to the objective, the infantry were to follow the lifts of the barrage.

long, clearly visible, as it went steadily into the valley, against the orange glare of the shells. The enemy's barrage presently fell densely along Park Lane, and, as usual, the fog of battle then for hours cut off the waiting headquarters from their advanced troops. The report eventually received from the senior company commander of the 50th—

three companies on objective and digging in, in touch with 13th on right

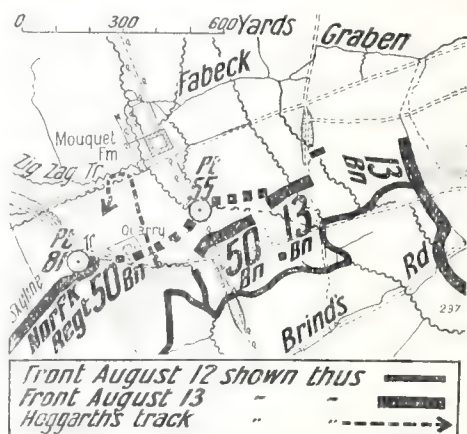
—left the front line at 11.30 p.m., and took two hours to reach battalion headquarters. Thence it had to be carried 700 yards to the advanced telephone station at Gibraltar, and eventually reached brigade headquarters in Sausage Valley three and a quarter hours after leaving the front line. An hour later arrived news that the left company at 81 was in touch with the Norfolk Regiment in Skyline Trench.

As the II Corps had captured Skyline Trench, being held up only on the right, the total result was naturally announced by the higher staffs as a sweeping success. Unfortunately the line given by the 50th was, except as regards the left, incorrect. After advancing about 250 yards without opposition both flanks of that battalion had met some resistance. The left company had pushed on to its objective—Point 81, where Skyline Trench was crossed by the Pozières-Thiepval road;<sup>55</sup> but opposite The Quarry there had opened a gap of 350 yards. This was partly due to the operation orders not having got through to all the platoons. Thus, in the line advancing near The Quarry, all that was known to the platoon commander, Lieutenant Hoggarth,<sup>56</sup> was that he was to go forward under the barrage and more or less conform to the company on his right. This he did, crossing the dip, mounting the far slope (passing east of The Quarry) and reaching, just over the rise, some large mounds of earth and rubble, which—though he was not aware of it—were the southern ruins of Mouquet Farm. No one moved

<sup>55</sup> Point 81 was really part of the II Corps' objective but was held throughout by troops of I Anzac, sometimes in conjunction with British troops.

<sup>56</sup> Lieut. W. P. Hoggarth, 50th Bn. Civil engineer; of Adelaide; b. Naracoorte, S. Aust., 25 Oct., 1889. Killed in action, 2 April, 1917.

in the place, which then lay under the British barrage. Still with the notion of following the barrage, Hoggarth moved along a zigzag trench near by (the German "Grosser Riegel") until he was wounded by one of the shells of his own side. Some Germans in a dug-out were killed and others captured and sent to the rear,<sup>57</sup> and a German bomber, who now emerged from the farm whirling a stick-grenade, was shot. Recognising that with Germans so near he could not hold an isolated position, Hoggarth returned, and dug in near Point 81; to his right was a wide gap, on the other side of which the centre and right of the 50th—still out of touch with the 13th—were established in detached bodies, 100 yards short of the objective. The flank of the 13th was some distance ahead, and Captain J. K. Henderson,<sup>58</sup> commanding it, had to bend back the line to gain touch. Towards dawn the Germans in some position close in front hampered the line of diggers by throwing flares and sniping; but these companies, throwing themselves flat whenever a flare arose, had before dawn established considerable lengths of new front line beyond the bottom of the depression, 300 yards south of Mouquet Farm. On the right flank the 13th secured a large artillery dugout, but had not enough men to dig a continuous line east of the sunken road in "Süd V." An attempt by German bombers at 4.45 a.m. to counter-attack the right of the 50th was shattered by Lewis gunners of the 13th, who looked out on them from the head of the valley.



*The uncaptured part of the objective is shown as a dotted line.*

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In addition to seeing the approach of the 50th during the afternoon, the Germans had been warned at 9 p.m. by the detection of strong forces assembling near Ovillers. This was probably the assembly of troops for the western half of the II Corps' operation. The 16th

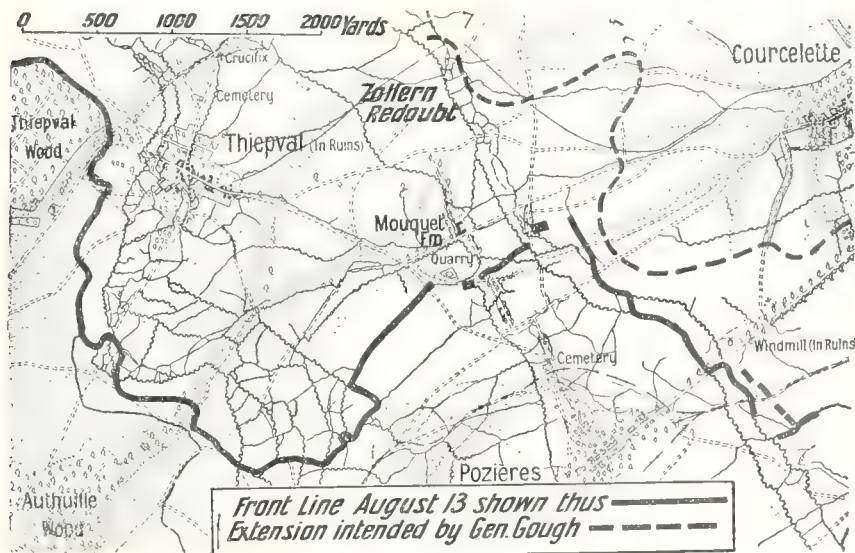
<sup>57</sup> They were fired on by mistake by a machine-gun then established in Point 81.

<sup>58</sup> Capt. J. K. Henderson, 13th Bn. Dental surgeon; of Sydney; b. London, 29 Jan., 1891. Killed in action, 14 Aug., 1916.



Division reported that it afterwards beat off an attack, and that thereupon, after intense bombardment, there followed another attack against the 29th and 69th Regiments. The British, it was said, attacking the 29th forced their way into the north-eastern part of Skyline Trench, but the 69th reported that the attempt in its sector (*i.e.*, that of the 50th and 13th Australian Battalions) had failed.

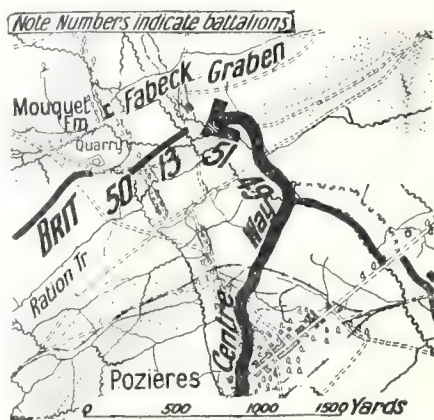
On the Australian side the mistaken report as to the location of the 50th remained uncorrected—a fact possibly due to certain weak spots in the regimental and company leadership not unusual in new battalions. The difference between the supposed and actual positions, however, was not great, and the success of the operations thus far justified General Gough's satisfaction. Within three and a half days of taking the first northward step, the Australians had thrust for a third of a mile along the ridge, and the line to the west had come up level with them. The effort of the 4th Division was not yet finished, and it was intended within the next three weeks to bring back all the Australian divisions for another tour. At the present rate of progress the I Anzac Corps would be well past the rear of Thiepval before the grand attack upon that place was due. At a conference at



the headquarters of the 4th Division on the morning of August 13th Gough outlined his plans for the next steps. He wished the I Anzac Corps to shift its front eastwards until it had

complete observation over the Courcellette valley.<sup>59</sup> As for the northward thrust, "in order to finish off this line<sup>60</sup> satisfactorily and to cover future operations" it would be necessary to capture the Feste Zollern, a strong knot of trenches 1,000 yards north of Mouquet Farm. The 4th Division would, in its turn, be rested after the next fight, but would be brought back for the final operations about the end of August, when it would probably relieve a British division on the flank of the 2nd Australian, two Australian divisions thus taking part side by side in the final thrust.

The immediate steps were the relief of the 12th British Division by the 48th (brought back for another tour), and of the 4th Australian Brigade, which had hitherto carried out the advance on the ridge, by the 13th. The change of the Australian brigades affected the staff more than the troops, since one battalion of the 13th Brigade—the 50th—was already in the line, and the 13th Battalion (4th Brigade) remained there under the new control, merely squeezing itself to the left to let in the 51st (Western Australian) on its right. This process, carried out during the night of August 13th, involved the utmost difficulty and discomfort. The only covered approach to the northern front lay round the firing line on the extreme right; and even of this—which was used by all three battalions—one sector ran down a forward slope directly exposed to enemy riflemen at easy range. The 13th and 51st were squeezed into trenches largely running towards the enemy, and were so congested that the fourth company of the



*Main route of communication shown by winding arrow.*

<sup>59</sup> To achieve this, it was to reach a line extending from the junction of Munster Alley and Switch Trench on the right, northwards along the 150 metre contour.

<sup>60</sup> That is, the line along the 150 metre contour. The quotation is from a précis of the proceedings at the conference.





surrounded, since it might prove only a shell-trap. The provision that such a centre might be ignored shows how little at that time was known of the strength of the place.

The plan, however, was not tested, for shortly before midnight the whole situation was changed by news from the II Corps that Skyline Trench—which throughout the whole of these operations was often barely occupied in consequence of its continual bombardment by whichever side did not possess it<sup>61</sup>—had been retaken by the Germans from the 48th Division.<sup>62</sup> At the same time came a report from the 50th Battalion that its left company had been forced to retire. This appears to have been inaccurate,<sup>63</sup> since Sergeant Mills,<sup>64</sup> who commanded the left platoon,<sup>65</sup> held on at Point 81 with a handful of men, some of them British, notwithstanding heavy shelling, and the post was afterwards strengthened by Captain Churchill Smith.<sup>66</sup> But the Germans occupied the trench beyond that point,<sup>67</sup> although for a time interspersed in an extraordinary manner with isolated bodies of British, the two sides looking out north and south respectively from alternate sectors. A counter-attack attempted by the 48th Division shortly after day-break on August 14th failed.

The recapture of Skyline Trench had been ordered by the commander of the German XIX Corps. At 10.15 a.m. on August 13 a report had just been received from the German artillery that the British were pushing forward from Skyline towards the "Konstanzer Graben" (the trench west of Mouquet Farm). The corps commander informed the 16th Division that Skyline Trench must be retaken and—to bar a further advance northwards, or to take it in flank—the communication trench from Mouquet Farm to Thiepval (the Grosser Riegel, afterwards known to the Australians as "Zigzag Trench") must be occupied, at least in the sector adjoining the farm. The I/68th I.R. was forthwith brought up from Haplincourt to Pys, and

<sup>61</sup> On August 17 Captain Fitzgerald, intelligence officer of the II Corps, and another staff officer, probing along this half-empty trench, found there a British soldier who for four days had been pinned to the earth by the burying of one of his arms. After trying vainly to "grub" him out with their hands, they went to the next Australian post, which sent some men for the purpose.

<sup>62</sup> The 48th Division had on that day taken it over from the 12th.

<sup>63</sup> It is possible that the original message was "company on left has retired," meaning the company of the neighbouring unit.

<sup>64</sup> Lieut. A. Mills, D.C.M.; 50th Bn. Labourer; of Adelaide; b. 1892.

<sup>65</sup> Mills was in command after Lieutenant Hoggarth and Captain F. H. Hancock (of Broken Hill, N.S.W.) had been wounded. Hancock had been hit before the advance.

<sup>66</sup> Maj. J. Churchill Smith, M.C.; 50th Bn. Audit clerk; of Millswood Estate, S. Aust.; b. Norwood, S. Aust., 15 Oct., 1894.

<sup>67</sup> According to some reports Germans were even seen near Fifth Avenue (Ration Trench).

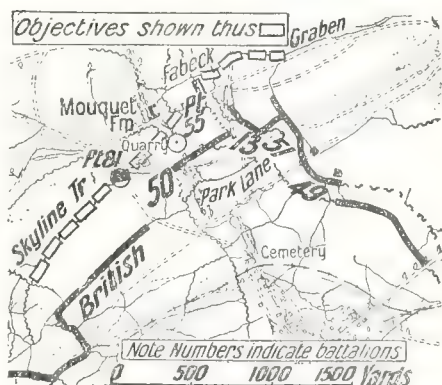


arrangements were made for the artillery preparation for this counter-attack. The artillery commander was instructed to secure the co-operation of the artillery of neighbouring corps and of the corps artillery reserve, and to arrange for the supply of sufficient ammunition. At 10.50 a.m. it was reported that the overwhelming artillery-fire already laid upon Skyline Trench had caused the British to retire from it to Ration Trench (Fifth Avenue), and fire was therefore directed upon that trench. Early in the afternoon the army commander and his chief-of-staff visited the headquarters of the 40th (Saxon), 24th (Saxon), and 16th Divisions to ascertain the precise position, with the result that the order to the 16th Division to retake Skyline Trench was confirmed.

Twice on this day movements of the Germans in this region were detected by the British: an airman saw troops concentrating north of Mouquet Farm, and these were accordingly shelled and "scattered wildly in all directions"; and, on reports from infantry and artillery observers, a force of infantry moving at noon from Courcellette to Mouquet Farm was furiously shelled by part of the Anzac field artillery and some heavies, which appeared to cause severe loss. What troops these were is not known. The counter-attack on Skyline Trench was duly launched at 10.30 p.m. The II/68th captured the north-eastern part of it, which was found full of British dead; but German reports said that the south-western sector remained in British hands. On the Australian front a *flammenwerfer* attack was made by the Germans at 3 a.m. against "the sunken road south of Süd V," but failed through hostile machine-gun fire. (No mention of such an attack on this day occurs in the Australian records.)

The loss of Skyline Trench placed out of question any immediate attempt to capture Mouquet Farm. The acuteness of the salient from whose point the Australian thrust must now be made is shown in the marginal sketch. The objective was accordingly modified as therein indicated, the three Australian battalions being allotted the objectives shown, while the 48th Division was to retake Skyline Trench.

Before the attack the 13th Battalion was to shift its front to the left, taking over the line of the 50th to "Point 55"<sup>68</sup> and giving more space to the 51st east of the sunken road in "Süd V," where no front-line trench existed.



<sup>68</sup> Point 55 had never actually been taken. See p. 756.

The 51st marked out, and during the night of the 13th dug to the depth of one or two feet, an advanced trench line on which its troops would assemble for the assault.<sup>69</sup> The enemy's artillery, as well as the British, fired incessantly throughout August 14th. As usual, while the Australians higher on the ridge did not escape, the 50th on the left suffered most severely, and the carriage of supplies, undertaken by the 52nd Battalion, was rendered almost impossible.

On this day had occurred an event which had a marked bearing on the enemy's attitude towards the problems of the northern quarter of the Somme battlefield. The 26th Reserve Division near Thiepval captured certain orders, or other British documents, which stated (or were interpreted by the Germans as stating) that Mouquet Farm must at all costs be captured that evening. The 26th Reserve Division at once informed the 16th, in whose area the farm lay. The staff of the XIX Corps now became aware (as is shown by German records) "that it was the clear intention of the British to force their way from Pozières and Mouquet Farm by repeated attacks, in order to render untenable the German position farther west."<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, at 6.30 p.m. the corps commander issued an order pointing out the British designs upon the farm and directing that, if they succeeded in forcing their way into the lines on either side of it, the 16th Division must at once undertake a concentrated counter-attack with the three reserve battalions lying between the Grosser Riegel (the Zigzag Trench south-west of the farm) and the Zollern Redoubt. The 24th Division must aid by attacking the Australian flank with the reserves lying behind the 133rd (Saxon) Regiment. The counter-attack must strive not merely to recapture lost ground but to gain more, and to drive the Australians out of the hollow road in "Süd V."

The result of the information gained appears to have been that the 16th and 24th (Saxon) Divisions not merely anticipated an attack on the Farm, but interpreted as attacks all movements seen during the day. Thus the 16th Division reported on August 14 that the "British" attacked the Farm at 1.20 p.m., 5.45, 7, 7.45, and 9.40. During these alarms the 24th Division, "until itself attacked" (possibly in Switch Trench by the Highlanders) supported the 16th Division with all available batteries, and reported that it had dealt effectively with hostile troops concentrated in Pozières and in the sunken roads south of the village. At 9.4 p.m. the Saxon division stated that thick clumps of "British" were retiring on Pozières—possibly some company being relieved. The whole heavy artillery of the division was accordingly concentrated on Pozières. The 16th Division afterwards reported that the first two "attacks" (1.20 p.m. and 5.45) had been smothered by barrage as they developed (the

<sup>69</sup> It also dug a length of communication trench to afford an easier approach from Park Lane.

<sup>70</sup> The words are quoted from a summary of a document of the XIX Corps staff dated the following day.

second—possibly another relief—was reported as “strong detachments proceeding towards Mouquet Farm”); the other three attempts were said to have been mostly broken up in the barrage, though certain elements came through and were driven off in trench-fighting.

It will be seen that a furious bombardment had been directed on the Australians for many hours before their assault, which was to be launched at 10 p.m. About two hours before that time the following message was received by the commander of the 50th:

7.55 p.m. From B Company. We cannot move. We have few tools, few bombs, no water, and the men are badly shaken. At present we are digging a number out. I have too few men to take up the frontage, and after consulting the company commanders have decided to remain fast. Am notifying 13th Battalion.

About the same time there arrived from the commander of the 13th, who had been informed of this intention, a vigorous protest, pointing out that his own operation would be jeopardised. The 13th also were under heavy strain, for Captain Harry Murray<sup>71</sup> almost immediately before the attack reported:

C Company rattled and only have 35 men.<sup>72</sup>

From the commander of the 51st, Lieutenant-Colonel Ross, a British regular, the brigadier (Glasgow) had received the following:

Dear General,

Both 13th C.O. thinks, and it is my genuine (not depressed) opinion that it would be a mistake to press the offensive further locally in this salient. We are heavily shelled from due E. right round to N.W., and the communications are simply *awful*. It really requires some days' solid work. Water- and ration-carrying is most precarious. The boys are sticking it well, but are so congested that it will be most difficult to deploy to-night. Do not worry about us, but we want WATER and digging tools always.

Our artillery are bombarding our own front trenches (heavies !!!).

The signs that the advance was approaching its limits were indeed abundant. A hurried order appears to have been sent to the company commanders of the 50th that they must attack as ordered, although the front-line troops of the 13th were unaware of this return to the original intention. At 10.30 the barrage fell and the assault began.

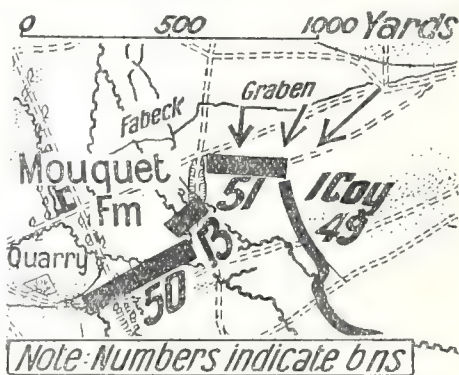
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<sup>71</sup> Murray had taken the place of Captain Barton, who was missing (*see footnote 39 on p. 746*).

<sup>72</sup> Captain Pulling accordingly sent him a platoon of another company.



The battalion responsible for the main advance on the right was a fine, comparatively fresh Western Australian unit, the 51st. Although as a battalion it was new, it contained a fair proportion of veteran officers and men from its mother-unit, the old 11th. The jumping-off line marked out the night before was not, of course, deep enough to give real shelter, and the three companies forming the first wave had therefore to leave their trenches after nightfall and move forward across the open to the assembly position. The moon was full, though misty, and despite confusion and congestion the companies succeeded in achieving some sort of deployment, but appear to have been detected by the enemy. The Fabeck Graben lay higher, on a gentle rise of the crest, and there were also German outposts on the open slope down towards Courcellette on the right of the 51st. As soon as the bombardment began, the battalion swept along the summit, but German machine-guns—apparently placed higher up, where the Fabeck Graben joined the Courcellette road—fired through the barrage. The right company, after advancing about 150 yards, was stopped by this fire.



Arrows indicate direction of enemy fire.

According to some reports the cry of "retire!" was raised and passed along the line to the left, parts of which were then approaching a German trench. There followed much confusion, the right falling back; and though in the centre and left some groups reached an enemy trench, their position under increasing fire at short range was hopeless, and their officers ordered them back. In many places small parties remained sheltering in craters in No-Man's Land. But gradually the confusion was to some extent resolved by the organising of a line of diggers along the "jumping-off" position to deepen the trench there. An attached company of the 49th established a trench covering the right.<sup>73</sup> By dawn

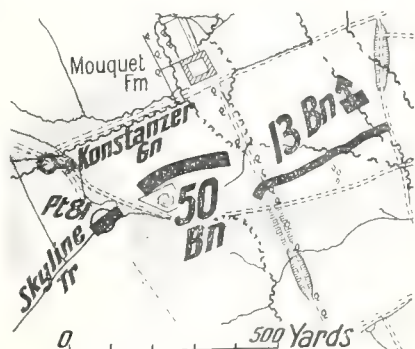
<sup>73</sup> They appear to have deepened a shallow cutting connecting some old artillery positions.



certain lengths of the "jumping-off" line, though still too shallow for permanent occupation, appear to have been incorporated in the Australian position.

On the other flank of the attack, a little before starting time, the companies of the 50th had been shifted slightly westward, in accordance with orders. This movement had hardly begun when a German barrage fell upon them.<sup>74</sup> The movement was blocked, and in one part the overstrained troops, lacking a leader, began to break in all directions. The panic was stayed by Captain Armitage,<sup>75</sup> and he and Captain Fowler<sup>76</sup> advanced with their companies up the other slope of the valley. The Quarry was found, and the troops began to dig in beyond it, mainly with their entrenching tools.

They were, however, exposed to machine-guns along the Konstanzer Graben which caused much loss. No other troops could be found on either flank. Major Herbert, Captain Fowler, and Lieutenants Beresford,<sup>77</sup> Dridan,<sup>78</sup> and Rhodes<sup>79</sup> were wounded or blown up, and it was not



easy for the remaining officers—Captain Armitage and Lieutenant Rule<sup>80</sup>—to keep the tired men at work.<sup>81</sup> Accordingly, after half-an-hour's effort, they withdrew the line.

<sup>74</sup> The movement had probably been detected, for it was observed that the Germans in front of the right flank of the 50th were throwing bombs as if in anticipation of attack.

<sup>75</sup> Capt. H. E. S. Armitage, 50th Bn. University student; of Houghton and Millicent, S. Aust.; b. Norwood, S. Aust., 11 Nov., 1894. Killed in action, 3 April, 1917.

<sup>76</sup> Maj. W. M. Fowler, M.C.; 50th Bn. Student; of Adelaide; b. Parkside, S. Aust., 26 Aug., 1895.

<sup>77</sup> Capt. W. R. De La P. Beresford, M.C.; 50th Bn. Surveyor; of North Adelaide; b. Port Darwin, Northern Territory, 31 Oct., 1893.

<sup>78</sup> Lieut. V. G. Dridan, 50th Bn. Orchardist; of Unley, S. Aust.; b. Payneham, S. Aust., 3 July, 1895. Died of wounds, 16 Aug., 1916.

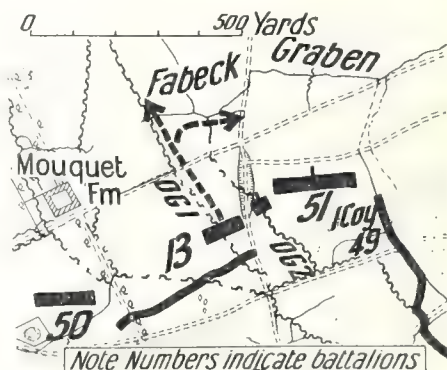
<sup>79</sup> Capt. R. L. Rhodes, M.C.; 50th Bn. Bank clerk; of Gilberton, S. Aust.; b. Norwood, S. Aust., 3 Aug., 1893.

<sup>80</sup> Lieut. E. T. J. Rule, 50th Bn. Blacksmith; of Burra, S. Aust.; b. Aberdeen, S. Aust., 4 Jan., 1895. Killed in action, 3 April, 1917.

<sup>81</sup> Rhodes, whose arm had been broken before the advance began, stayed with his men, himself sitting in the open, nursing the arm and encouraging the men. He eventually returned with his platoon.

Neither the 51st nor 50th had been able to get touch with the 13th—which was to have advanced between and connected them.<sup>62</sup> Yet that battalion had made a most notable advance. It was advancing with two companies and part of a third in two waves, the first about 100 strong, the second 80. The probable line of the covering barrage being uncertain, its men were kept in their trench until the guns opened, and when it was seen that their shells fell clear, the first wave scrambled out. There broke out immediately what Captain Murray (who commanded that wave) described as “the hottest fire I ever saw, even including the Peninsula.” It was afterwards reported that the German trench was crowded through the occurrence of a relief.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless the 13th, led by Murray, advanced beside O.G.I until near the Fabeck Graben and, when thirty yards from that trench, charged. For a couple of seconds the Germans seemed to hesitate, and then scrambled over the parapots or rushed to the flanks, the Australians shooting them



down. On the left an enemy machine-gun had been firing from a little forward sap. One of the nearest New South Welshmen crept up, threw at the gun a pick which he was carrying, followed this up with a bomb killing two of the crew, and then leapt into the trench with a mate and captured the gun and eleven prisoners.<sup>64</sup> The second wave—eighty

<sup>62</sup> The commander of the 50th afterwards complained that the 13th had not extended its left to Point 55, which his battalion was to hand over to it. That point, however, in spite of his renewed assurance, had never been reached. The orders of the 13th were (“as there is much uncertainty as to the present position of the flanks”) simply to keep close touch with the battalions on either flank. Unfortunately there did not exist between these three units the same close understanding and mutual trust which would have been present had all belonged to the same brigade.

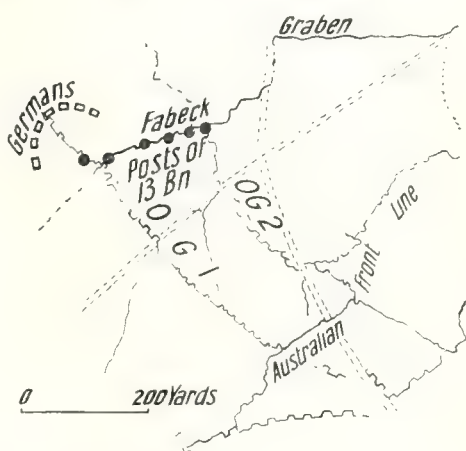
<sup>63</sup> The 51st had received the impression that the enemy himself was preparing to attack.

<sup>64</sup> Company Sergeant-Major G. Hardy (of Sydney), who started with these two men received nine bullets through his thigh. The other two, Lance-Corporals G. C. Smith (of Bathurst, N.S.W.) and B. S. N. Patrick (of Ashfield, N.S.W.), were sent back by Captain Murray to the Australian lines with their prisoners.

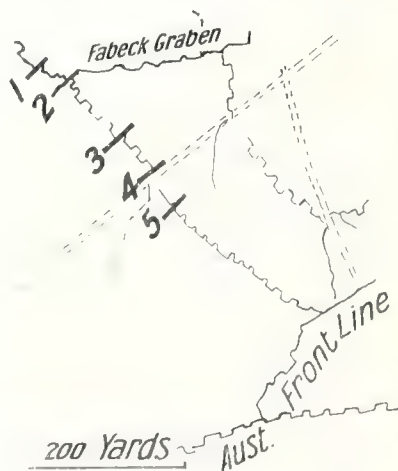
strong—arrived within a minute of the first, and after sharp bomb-fights both in the trench and on the parapet the Fabeck Graben was cleared for 200 yards to the right beyond its junction with O.G.2, and the dugouts probed by the bombing sections. Posts were stationed at either end as well as 40 yards up O.G.1, prominent traverses being used for bomb-stops.

Murray expected to find the 51st on his right; but within ten minutes of being stationed the post on that flank was strongly attacked by Germans. These were beaten off, but returned to the assault. Recognising that something must be wrong with the effort of the 51st, Murray now despatched to the rear a messenger asking for news. Meanwhile from the advanced post in O.G.1 a number of men were by moonlight observed approaching at walking pace over the open. These might be the 51st, but, as they advanced from three sides, Murray prepared for them by throwing out a few men into the open on either side a little in rear of the post, stationing a Lewis gun on either bank of the trench. At thirty yards he challenged. The strangers fired, and were at once driven off by the Lewis guns. Having by then no more than twenty bombs, the men threw them slowly, using also German grenades.

Though no answer had yet come to his message, Murray was now certain that the 51st had failed. Being short of men, he took the precaution of withdrawing from the Fabeck Graben those he had, retaining only the T-head just beyond it in O.G.1. To guard his line of retreat, similar posts were stationed at intervals down O.G.1 to the rear. After half-an-hour's pause the Germans again approached the T-head from three sides. When twenty yards distant, those in the open were again



driven back by fire; but those approaching up the trench persisted, obviously believing that the Australians (whose bombs appeared to be finished) had withdrawn. While a search was being made for more bombs, this party was allowed to come round the traverse ahead of the Australian block, and was then shot down by a Lewis gun. The German bomb-throwing thereupon ceased for twenty minutes. At this stage Murray's messenger returned, having met half-way a runner from Captain Pulling who brought definite news of the failure of the 51st. Murray at once ordered that the wounded, who had already been carried back some distance, should be cleared by Sergeant Kay<sup>85</sup> to the old line. The Germans were again closely pressing their attack, now supported by machine-guns and a medium trench-mortar, which annihilated at least one post with its bombs. As the artillery of his own side might also be expected at any moment to shorten on to his position, Murray decided to withdraw. The Germans were close in front and on either flank; but, forming a second short line in the open astride of O.G.1 fifty yards in rear of the foremost T-head, Murray withdrew his advanced post through it without difficulty. This proceeding he repeated four times, the German bombers following. At the fourth stage, as there were still wounded to be cleared, the post had to be held against a strong attack. Only six bombs, gathered from several sources and jealously preserved, remained. Though the Germans were being held by rifle-fire, the position was critical. It had at last been decided to throw the six bombs and then retire as best they could over the open, when two sections of the bombing



<sup>85</sup> Lieut. E. Kay, 13th Bn. Farmer; of Ardlethan, N.S.W.; b. Kensington, London, Eng., 10 Aug., 1886. Accidentally killed, 16 Jan., 1924.



platoon arrived under Lieutenant R. J. Henderson.<sup>86</sup> Each of its men carried thirty bombs, and within five minutes they had chased the Germans a hundred yards up the trench. So just before dawn, after one of the most skilfully conducted fights in the history of the A.I.F., Murray's men and the bombers returned across No-Man's Land entirely unmolested.<sup>87</sup> To the east remnants of the 51st dribbled in from No-Man's Land during the rest of the day.<sup>88</sup> To the west the 50th was in its original line; the 48th Division had retaken the greater part of Skyline Trench, but had again failed to secure its western end and the knot of trenches where it joined the old German front-line system.

It is interesting evidence of the obscurity of such a battle that, while there exist, as has been already related, German reports of several imagined attacks during the 14th, there was found among the available staff records no reference to the real assault at 10 p.m., unless it be the casual mention of elements which managed to get through the earlier German barrage but were repulsed. The reason probably was that most of the trenches invaded had in many parts been broken down by the bombardment, and that from other parts the garrison fled. West of the Farm the Grosser Riegel (Zigzag Communication Trench to Thiepval) was, according to German accounts, almost obliterated, and east of it the trenches—including the west end of Fabeck Graben—"completely destroyed." (This was true, for west of where Murray penetrated it no trace of the trench remained.) The front attacked seems to have been held on this night by the II/69th, with the III/69th (in course of relief by the I Battalion) in support in the northern part of the Fabeck Graben, and the 133rd (Saxon) on the right flank. German prisoners remarked that troops (possibly the 51st) were seen attacking on the eastern flank, and the garrison therefore tended to crowd to the west, where the 13th, advancing very quickly, surprised them.

The Saxons, as well as the Rhinelanders, had suffered heavy losses in the bombardment, and it began to be noted by British intelligence officers that, whereas their spirit at the beginning of their tour had been high, it was rapidly deteriorating. This evening an outpost of

<sup>86</sup> Capt. R. J. Henderson, M.C.; 13th Bn. Electrician; of Drummoyne, N.S.W.; b. Drummoyne, 13 Dec., 1885. Died of wounds, 13 May, 1918.

<sup>87</sup> Captain A. G. Fox, who had been badly wounded, was missing. Captain Murray and Lieutenant R. J. Henderson searched No-Man's Land for him until they themselves narrowly escaped being cut off. Fox and several of the other wounded were picked up and made prisoner by the enemy next day. A few men who had gone too far were also captured. Of the other officers of the 13th, Captain J. K. Henderson was killed, and Lieutenants C. B. Meyer, R. Walter, W. U. Clasper, C. H. Farlow, and A. Lanagan wounded. Farlow died of his wounds. Meyer was made prisoner. Captain H. L. Henley was killed during the relief. (Fox belonged to Sydney and Adelaide; Meyer and Walter to Sydney; Clasper to Chatswood, N.S.W.; Farlow to Wellington, N.S.W.; Lanagan to Bourke and Warialda, N.S.W.; and Henley to Drummoyne, N.S.W.).

<sup>88</sup> The 51st took a few prisoners, Saxons of the 133rd Regiment.

seven Saxons of the 133rd<sup>89</sup> (according to one account) "came in and surrendered" to the 51st. They were "little insignificant weeds, being a city population." The Rhinelanders, on the other hand, were judged by intelligence officers to be men of firmer determination. Prisoners of the 16th Division stated that it was known among them as the "*Eiserne (Iron) Division*," its discipline being very severe.<sup>90</sup>

Gough's northward advance had thus met with its first check. Faced with the strong and continuous defence line through Mouquet Farm, the I Anzac Corps, though part of its attacking troops were fresh, had not won an inch of enemy ground. The 51st had lost some 300 officers and men, the 13th (in this and the earlier engagements) 386, the 50th 414. All three battalions were worn out. The relief of the 4th Division by the 1st, which had already been brought back to Albert, was therefore at once begun. Brought in on the night of August 5th, the 4th Division had in nine days not only borne the brunt of the German counter-measures against Pozières heights, but in six successive night attacks—with only one night's interval—had brought the line within striking distance of Mouquet Farm. Its losses were considerably lighter than those of its two predecessors, 4,649 in all.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> The narrative quoted (a private diary) says 139th (Saxon); but that regiment was farther south. Opposite the III Corps desertion by Saxons was frequent.

<sup>90</sup> It is probable that several divisions claimed this title.

<sup>91</sup> Particulars of losses were:

4th Brigade.			12th Brigade.			13th Brigade.		
	Off.	O.R.		Off.	O.R.		Off.	O.R.
Bde. H.Q.	—	—	Bde. H.Q.	—	2	Bde. H.Q.	—	—
4th M.G. Coy.	2	21	12th M.G. Coy.	1	23	13th M.G. Coy.	1	15
13th Bn.	18	368	45th Bn.	10	438	49th Bn.	1	64
14th Bn.	6	403	46th Bn.	1	232	50th Bn.	8	406
15th Bn.	15	415	47th Bn.	13	354	51st Bn.	6	295
16th Bn.	3	403	48th Bn.	25	610	52nd Bn.	1	76
						Officers. Other Ranks.		
Div. H.Q.						— 2		
Div. Art.						11 68		
4th Div. Engrs.						5 52		
4th Div. Sig. Coy.						1 5		
4th Pioneer Bn.						5 219		
Medical Corps						— 38		
4th Div. Train						— 7		

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE DEADLOCK AT MOUQUET FARM

THE brigades of the 1st Division, brought back to the line less than three weeks after having lost 5,000 men, had been made up by reinforcements—already running short—to about two-thirds of their strength. They had been rested and exercised, but the new element naturally to some extent diminished their efficiency. Moreover, though the older troops had gained in experience, it was unlikely that within so short a time they could have entirely recovered from strain such as that of Pozières. The order to return to this sector had been in a large measure expected, and the prospect was accepted in much the same spirit in which a boy accepts that of an inevitable disciplinary thrashing. Some, it is true, thought that the extent of the casualties in the first tour would save the division from a second; but Birdwood, who knew, and in all probability approved, the army commander's intention, never allowed these false hopes to grow. His speeches to the resting troops always adopted an invigorating tone—they had drubbed the Germans and he was sure they were all anxious to get back and kill some more. Some caught his spirit; many more listened grimly to his praises, and called them by a harsh Australian name for idle flattery; a certain number suspected that the desire to furnish a success had caused him to pledge them to an impossible task. These—with many fine men among them—returned to the line determined to do their "job," but with deep bitterness in their hearts.

Before the division re-entered the line, its commander had been informed of the tasks proposed for it. Gough had decided that the II Corps, having several times failed to blunt the re-entrant in its centre, must undertake the task methodically by small stages. This would occupy it until at least August 20th, and until that date it could not co-operate at Mouquet Farm with the Australians. The Anzac Corps must therefore continue the thrust by itself. On the 15th

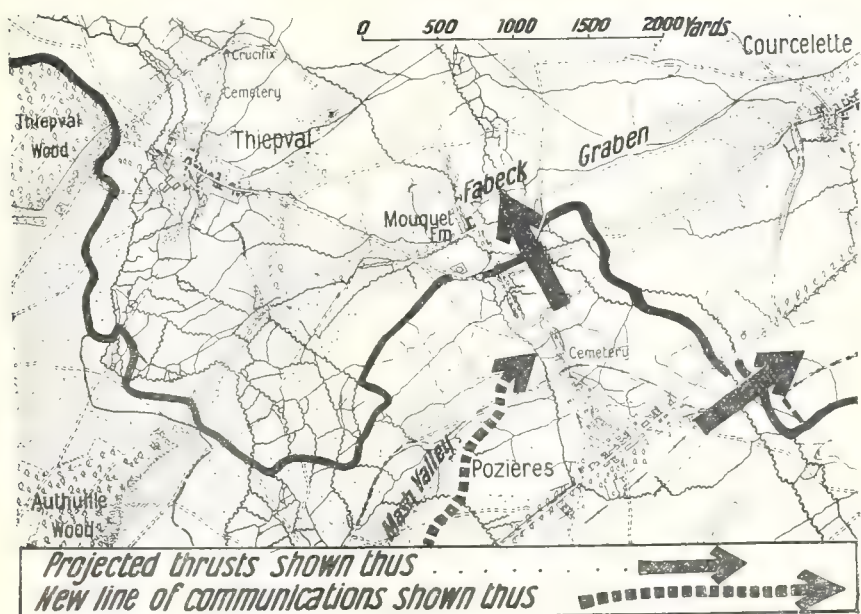
Haig had informed Gough that the newly transferred commander of the XIV Corps (Lord Cavan<sup>1</sup>) and the French corps commander on his right had arranged to renew the main attack on Guillemont on August 18th, and would be assisted by local offensives of the XV and III Corps against the Intermediate and Switch Trenches. New methods were being employed: there would be a deliberate bombardment lasting two days, but, until the actual starting-hour, no sudden increase of artillery fire, discharge of smoke, or other signs of coming attack. The infantry would then advance behind a creeping barrage.<sup>2</sup> If the operations succeeded at Guillemont, they would be continued against Ginchy, in conjunction with French operations, on the 22nd. It would therefore be advantageous if any enterprises planned by the Reserve Army could be arranged for the same dates. Certain much more extensive plans for the Reserve Army's subsequent actions must be deferred, Gough concentrating on his main object—the reduction of Thiepval. This he must carry out with the troops he already had; it was even probable that his force north of the Ancre would be reduced to two divisions.

General Walker of the 1st Australian Division was accordingly informed on August 15th that his division, which would be in the line until the 22nd or 23rd (when it would commence its move to Ypres), would be expected to make two attacks, (1) northward, to reach the Fabeck Graben and enclose Mouquet Farm, (2) eastward, to capture the new German front-line trench opposite the windmill. In forwarding these proposals White—with Birdwood's authority—again suggested that it would be wise to establish a "jumping-off" trench half-way to the Fabeck Graben. He added that there were good reasons why the attack should be on the 18th; the date, however, would be decided by the progress of the preparations, which General Birdwood was sure the division would press forward. The II Corps would probably not be

<sup>1</sup> General Lord Cavan, K.P., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., G.B.E. Commanded 4th Inf. Bde., 1914/15; Guards Div., 1915; XIV Corps, 1916/18; and was in charge of operations of Tenth Italian Army on the Piave, 1918. Officer of British Regular Army; of Wheathampstead, Herts., Eng.; b. Ayot, Herts., 16 Oct., 1865.

<sup>2</sup> One of the earliest creeping barrages. The Fourth Army order laid down that the infantry would "advance to the assault covered by the field artillery curtain, which will be regulated by corps in accordance with the distance of the assembly trench from the first objective. The infantry will follow as close behind the curtain as possible till they reach their objectives." There is no record as to how far the detailed arrangements were imparted to Gough.





ready until August 22nd. As the front was lengthening, another brigade of artillery—the 6th Australian—would be brought up in support. Its batteries were the first to be emplaced in Mash Valley.<sup>3</sup>

It was now well recognised, and indeed obvious, that, as Colonel Ross's letter<sup>4</sup> pointed out, no further success could be expected until several nights had been devoted to improving the communications—work by day was almost impossible on the ridge. Accordingly both the 1st Brigade (New South Wales), which Walker put in to continue the northward thrust, and the 2nd (Victoria), which was to make the attack east of the windmill, were charged with digging and sapping forward to build up a "jumping-off" trench, while the engineer companies and pioneers improved the communications. The I Anzac Corps was now for the first time allotted an avenue of approach north of the Bapaume road, up First Avenue<sup>5</sup> and the eastern end of Fourth Avenue. This somewhat shortened the route to the left and avoided—for at least some of the troops—the long circuit through Pozieres.

<sup>3</sup> The field artillery, mostly crowded at the head of Sausage Valley, was now firing at very long range.

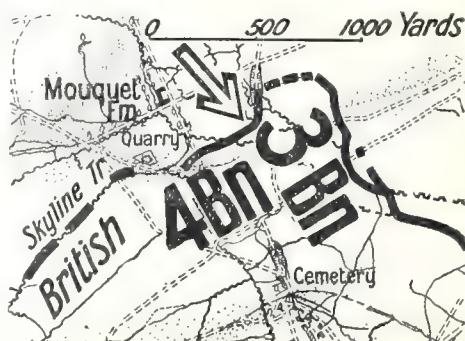
<sup>4</sup> See p. 763.

<sup>5</sup> First Avenue lay just north of the Bapaume road. Its eastern end had been destroyed.

In the early morning of August 16 the German 16th Division saw and reported much circulation in the lines facing it, from which it rightly judged that a relief was in progress. The 24th (Saxon) Division observed similar movement (possibly that of working parties of the 2nd Brigade) on its own front between 7 and 8 that evening.

The 2nd Brigade, whose 5th and 6th Battalions took over the windmill line from the 12th Brigade on August 15th, was able to mark out, and on the night of the 16th to dig, a considerable part of its "jumping-off" trench for the coming attack. But the 1st Brigade, though in the quiet hours after dawn on August 16th it relieved without serious loss the troops on the northern

front, had no such opportunity. The 4th and 3rd Battalions had taken over the positions shown in the marginal sketch;<sup>6</sup> towards evening the commander of the 4th, Iven Mackay, was conferring with his company leaders in the front line when, about 4.50 p.m., the Germans opened a bombardment



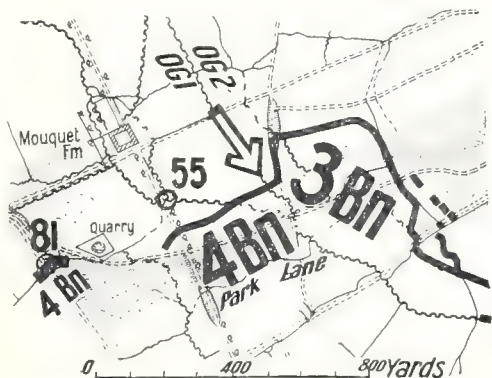
which, being continuous, appeared likely to be followed by attack. A shell falling among the conferring officers wounded Captain Osborne and Lieutenant Lane,<sup>7</sup> the rest being scratched and covered with dust. At 7 small parties of Germans were seen either advancing over the open or moving along broken-down trenches. The conference was abandoned, and the officers sent to their companies. About 7.30 the bombardment increased, and rifle-fire broke out, apparently intended to cover an advance.

The 4th Battalion and the neighbouring part of the 3rd stood to arms. In front of their point of junction men were seen moving (as shown in the marginal sketch), but it was at first uncertain that they were not Australian digging

<sup>6</sup> They had relieved four battalions—50th, 13th, 51st, and 49th. The 52nd Battalion, which had been carrying for the 13th Brigade, was relieved (in Wire Trench near La Boisselle) by the 2nd.

<sup>7</sup> Lieut. L. M. Lane, 4th Bn. Grazier; of Orange, N.S.W.; b. Orange, 25 Nov., 1892. Killed in action, 2 March, 1917.

parties or patrols. Some time after dark, however, seven or eight successive lines, each of about ten men widely extended, were seen approaching Lieutenant Allen's<sup>8</sup> platoon of the 4th near O.G.I. At this point there happened to be waiting three teams of the 4th Battalion bombers, who were to have pushed forward at 7 o'clock but had been held in the trench in consequence of the uncertainty of the situation. The Germans, when twelve yards away, "gave a feeble cheer" (the words are Lieutenant Allen's) and charged,



but melted in front of the rifle-fire and bombs which met them. A Lewis gun of the 3rd close on the right was also turned upon them, and at least fourteen Germans lay there dead next day. Elsewhere, though several parties of the enemy approached the lines, only two came within bombing range; but Colonel Howell-Price of the 3rd Battalion next day observed that the Germans on his front had, under cover of the barrage, dug a new line closer than the Fabeck Graben. He also observed that a new trench was being dug to shut in his right, and he spent part of the morning in getting the field artillery to range their guns upon it.<sup>9</sup>

As often occurred, a fairly important counter-attack had been attempted by one side without the other—by whom it was easily repulsed—recognising its full extent. Indeed, opposite the British in Skyline Trench no attack was reported until the following night, when a threatening assault was apparently dispersed. The fact, however, appears to have been that—in accordance with the standing order to retake all lost ground—the XIX Corps had intended on the night of the 16th to recapture both Skyline Trench and the Australian front near Mouquet Farm. The operation had been carefully prepared, the chief-of-staff of the corps and the general commanding its artillery visiting the 16th Division's Headquarters during the day to examine

<sup>8</sup> Capt. A. S. Allen, M.C.; 4th Bn. Bank clerk; of Kensington, N.S.W.; b. Moruya, N.S.W., 21 April, 1896. Died of wounds, 21 July, 1918.

<sup>9</sup> The observing officers were nervous about bringing their barrage on this flank as close as he wanted. It was not, however, in this sector that shells subsequently fell too short.



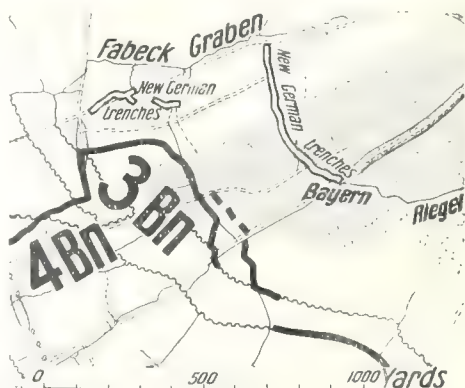
the plans. They found several defects: neither the 69th Regiment nor the 133rd knew which was to attack the sunken road in "Süd V." The control of the attack was therefore transferred from the brigade staff to that of the division, and proper co-operation by the artillery was arranged.

At 6.40 in the evening the 16th Division warned the corps staff that an attack on a large scale was probably preparing against the division's right (*i.e.*, the re-entrant opposite the II British Corps). As the 29th Regiment had lost about half its strength, it was proposed that the 99th Reserve Regiment (2nd Guard Reserve Division) should be stationed behind it.

Owing to heavy shell-fire the German battalions (apparently of the 68th and 133rd Regiments) intended for the projected counter-attack could reach their starting positions only in small detachments, and not before 11 p.m. The operation was therefore fixed for that hour. It was afterwards reported that the deployment had generally failed. An attempt to retake Skyline Trench had melted away before rifle and machine-gun fire. That on the Australian position east of "Süd V" met the same fate. The troops advancing against the sunken road itself did not quite reach their objective, but dug a line short of it (as Howell-Price next day reported).

One party, which was to attack east of the Farm with *flammenwerfer*, afterwards reported that it had been deceived by its opponents (Australians) shouting, in German, orders to retire ("Zurück!" "Kehrt Marsch!") and had retired. In the opinion of the German staff, this explanation was to some extent confirmed by prisoners, who said that such cries were used by patrols, if necessary, to deceive German patrols and escape. [There is, indeed, one recorded instance of this during the service of the Australians at Armentières; but the attribution of these ruses to the Australians as a common practice is as groundless as were most of the Australian stories about such cleverness on the part of Germans and Turks.]

This night also the Germans began a trench to close in the Australian flank on the east by joining the Bayern and Fabeck Trenches.<sup>10</sup> They had now lightened their garrison east of Pozières, but increased it north of the Anzac position. Their knowledge of the British plans, based on information contained in a captured document,<sup>11</sup> appears to have been strengthened by the incautious statement of



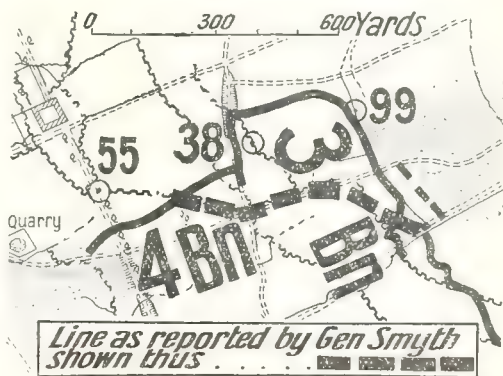
<sup>10</sup> The trench on which Howell-Price directed the artillery. The II and III/133 came up from billets to dig it.

<sup>11</sup> See p. 762.



an officer captured by the 29th Regiment (that is, on the II Corps front) who, according to German records, said that the line south of Thiepval would not be heavily attacked, since it was known to be very strong. Efforts would rather be made to break through at the farm so as to cut off the position south of Thiepval.

The disturbed conditions of that night had prevented the working parties of the 1st Australian Brigade from arriving, and, except on the ridge where the 3rd Battalion's own parties cut a few short saps (while the Germans were working unseen on their new trench barely 300 yards ahead), little digging was accomplished. The preparations were next hampered by an even more serious difficulty. The staff of the division, receiving on August 16th the proposals of the 1st Brigade for the advanced saps, noted that on the right these would all be *behind* the reported position of the front line. To resolve this doubt, the commander of the 1st Brigade, General Smyth, a man whose whole nature was averse from exaggeration, early next morning (August 17th) visited the Quarry valley and convinced himself that his front line was not so far forward, either there or on the ridge, as it was reported to be. The supposed mistake was duly notified to the other staffs; but later that day an urgent message was received from the 3rd Battalion to the effect that two "advanced positions" (38 and 99), from which the battalion had been warned temporarily to withdraw in order to allow a bombardment by the heavies, were not in front of, but *in* the front line. The battalion asked



that the artillery should be stopped in time; so bad, however, were the communications that it took two hours for a runner to reach brigade headquarters. Meanwhile the report that the line was not so advanced as had been believed had reached corps headquarters, which referred it to Colonel Ross, the last occupant of the position in question. He maintained that

his report had been correct, and indeed photographs taken that morning by airmen of No. 7 Squadron showed a well-marked trench in the position he had claimed to occupy. Up at the front the young commander of the 3rd, Howell-Price, employing the method which he invariably adopted, personally explored his front line, and, scanning the dun wilderness that extended in all directions,<sup>12</sup> made sure of one point—that a scooped channel of brown earth in which he stood could not be anything else than the sunken road in "Süd V." His front trench ran into it on the left; his right—as he judged by compass bearings taken on the spot—lay at Point 99. He despatched to brigade headquarters a map "as accurate as I am able to get it, there being no landmarks." An aeroplane of the 7th Squadron was next sent up, and Howell-Price again went to his front to arrange for the lighting of flares. Three different locations of the front had been supported—one by the battalion, another by the brigade staff (which, however, was now converted to the battalion view), and another by the staff of the division. As the heavy howitzers were to carry out their bombardment at 6 p.m., Price at 5.30 sent two more urgent messages.<sup>13</sup> Divisional headquarters, which received the corrections, did not consider the danger serious; but at 6 p.m. the bombardment began, and a proportion of the heavy shells duly exploded on the front line of the 3rd. After sending another urgent message reporting the fact, Price asked for a more determined effort to extend telephone communication to his headquarters:

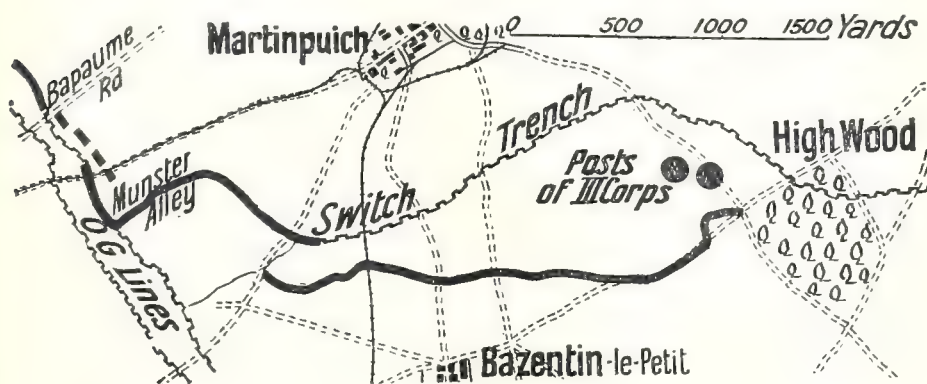
Can this matter have attention, please? At present I am endeavouring by all means possible to stop our artillery from firing, and it is now 45 minutes since I sent my first message and one gun is still firing with disastrous effect.

While these difficulties on its northern front were perplexing the Anzac Corps, the two days' steady bombardment preceding the Fourth Army's forthcoming attack was in progress. At 2.45 on the afternoon of the 18th this attack was launched, and some success was at last achieved at Guillemont, the outskirts of the village being reached and held. The 33rd Division (XV Corps)—which employed a "creeping" barrage

<sup>12</sup> Several heavy showers fell on this day (17th), turning the crater-field to mud.

<sup>13</sup> One by an artillery officer and another by a war correspondent. Both hurried back to advanced telephone stations and sent them, but both were late.

—failed to seize the northern half of High Wood, and on its left the 1st British Division (III Corps), though one brigade reached its objective, had to fall back. Next to the Australians the 15th (Scottish) Division had on the previous morning already seized part of the Switch near Munster Alley, and, grasping its opportunities, had after heavy fighting subsequently extended the gain. Though the British operations near High Wood had failed, the tension induced by constant bombardment and attack was so acute that the Saxon troops practically abandoned the crest south of Martinpuich. This fact was discovered by Scottish patrols and confirmed by a British airman, who on August 19th reported the Switch Trench empty. Posts of the XV Corps next day actually established



themselves on the slopes dipping to Martinpuich, a remnant of the Saxon garrison fleeing before them. Some hours later the Germans rallied in force, and the British posts had to retire from the summit, though they held a number of the positions gained. The Scots in the meantime had further extended their hold upon the Switch.

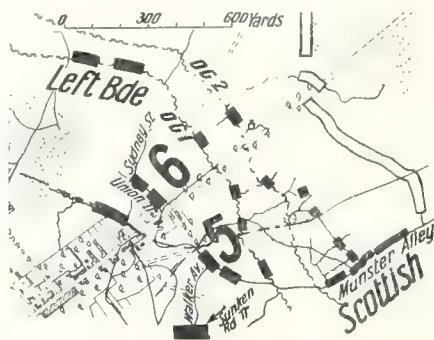
As has been said, this fighting, and the bombardment which accompanied it, fell severely upon the Saxons. According to German accounts, the attack of the 15th (Scottish) Division on August 17 forced its way between the 139th and 179th Regiments—the two easternmost of the 24th (Saxon) Divisions; but, though the German loss was heavy, the breach in the front line was barred by the making of a new switch trench. A battalion of the 134th Regiment was brought to Martinpuich to support, and the 24th Division asked urgently for reinforcements, warning the XIX Corps that the new

line was thinly held and could only be maintained for a few hours. Next day the Scots penetrated farther.

When the British XV Corps launched its assault on the 18th, the 40th (Saxon) Division reported that it had been attacked along its whole front; that on the crest south of Martinpuich the advance had been checked by a half-company and two machine-guns, and had also eventually been driven back on both sides of High Wood. The losses of the whole corps, however, had been extraordinarily heavy. The 24th Division on this day reported that, through continuous fighting, the 139th and 179th Regiments were no longer in a position to defend their trenches.

The XIX Corps was obviously worn out. The 1st Bavarian Division was accordingly brought up, some of its advanced troops (3rd Bavarian R.I.R.) reaching Warlencourt on the 18th. Next day the XIX Corps was informed that the Guard Reserve Corps had been ordered to speed up its assembly in the second army area, using the railway for that purpose. A breakdown of the German defence on the crest south of Martinpuich was evidently feared by the army commander, for on the evening of August 19 an order was issued which stated that he regarded that crest and High Wood as of vital importance. The III/3rd Bavarian R.I.R. was put in, and these were probably the troops who next day retook the crest after its temporary occupation by the British.

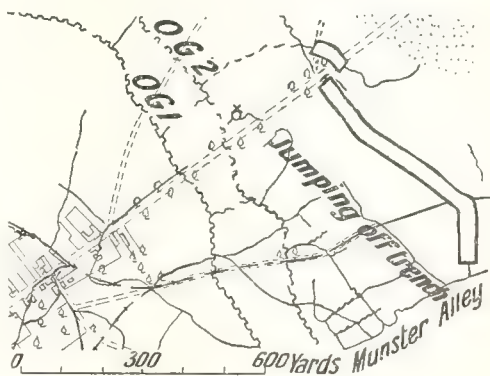
The two Australian attacks—eastward and northward—must now be described. The northern assault, probably because of its limited nature, had been arranged to take place about dusk; and, although the operation of the 2nd Brigade (designed to extend eastwards of the front at the windmill) would take place on the flank of the British operations, it was eventually decided to arrange it for the same hour as the Mouquet Farm thrust, namely, at 8 p.m.<sup>14</sup> Since the fighting in which the Pozzières heights were captured, the garrison on the actual crest at the windmill had been greatly reduced in consequence of the perpetual shelling of those heights. O.G.2 had long since disappeared. O.G.1 was no more than a track between the entrances of dugouts;



<sup>14</sup> This hour was altered on the 18th to 9 p.m. (see p. 782). The hour originally proposed was that of the main British attack, 2.45 p.m.



several platoons of the 2nd Brigade placed there on August 15th lost half their strength within twenty-four hours by shelling and were consequently withdrawn. The garrison—5th and 6th Battalions—was thereafter posted as follows: small outposts in the forward T-head saps excellently dug by the 12th Brigade; company headquarters and most of the Lewis guns in the dugouts of O.G.1; the rest of the front-line battalions back in the old “jumping-off” trench of August 4th (Union Trench), where were also some Vickers guns, and in the Tramway and Sunken Road Trenches near Pozières. The “jumping-off” trench for the new attack was pegged out in No-Man’s Land on the night of August 15th, and was to be dug the following night by pioneers and working parties of the 7th and 8th Battalions. When that night arrived, arrangements on the 6th Battalion front, north of the windmill, miscarried, the 6th eventually digging its own trench on the night of the 17th. Also south of the windmill on the front of the 5th certain parties which were to go out from Munster Alley were late, not having found their guides; nevertheless in the sector from Munster Alley to the old railway, where the crest hid the diggers from the Germans, the trench was well dug, though between the railway and the road where the enemy trench was close ahead and the diggers in view, little progress was possible.<sup>15</sup> Some of the 8th, under Lieutenant Barrie, continued at work during the 17th, improving and extending the trench in their sector. The task was to be continued that night by 150 of the 5th, but the enemy laid down a bombardment so severe that the engineers reported the task



<sup>15</sup> The task of marking the trench had also been difficult here, and the pegs are said to have been far out of alignment. This work was afterwards called “Dot Trench,” and one of the communication saps “Peg Trench,” after the daughters of the brigadier.

impracticable. The reply from brigade headquarters was that the work must be looked on as part of the battle, and must be carried through. The 5th accordingly went out, and under heavy shell-fire worked through the night, losing four officers<sup>16</sup> (three of whom died) and a large number of men.

South of the main road the "jumping-off" trench, where complete, was now occupied by several platoons of the 7th and 8th Battalions, whose companies were to deliver the main attack. The left of the 7th was to capture a strong-point where a side road to Courcellette branched from the main road. The 6th Battalion north of the road was merely to go out and dig a line from this strong-point to The Elbow. These plans were explained to the company commanders, as also was the fact that the starting-time had been postponed for an hour and that the troops must advance behind a gradually lifting barrage. But the details—what would be the actual minute for the commencement of the barrage, where it would



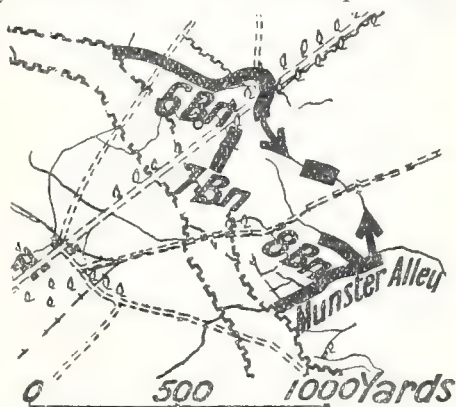
fall, and what were the time and extent of each of the lifts—were stated only in the artillery orders, and at 7.30 p.m. these had not arrived at brigade headquarters. As the attack was to be at 9, and communication with the front trenches was exceedingly difficult, the brigade staff was acutely anxious lest the order might not reach its troops in time. When the document came to hand at 7.40 it was practically certain that it could not do so.<sup>17</sup>

The true details of this action were not immediately afterwards known. As often happened, the conception of

<sup>16</sup> One of these was Lieutenant T. A. Hooper (of Glenferrie, Vic.).

<sup>17</sup> This barrage would really be the first "creeping barrage" to be followed by Australian infantry, falling first about 100 yards ahead of the "jumping-off" position, and then lifting by stages of (roughly) 150 yards on to and beyond the objective. The barrage would rest on each line, except the final one, for a minute.

it possessed at headquarters during the fight was drawn from short hurried messages, often necessarily ambiguous. From news which began to arrive about 10.30 it was gathered that the right wing of the right battalion (8th) and the left of the centre battalion (7th) had failed, but that the 6th had reached the strong-point at the fork of the main road, whence it was digging a line north-westwards towards The Elbow, while from the south-west a party of the 7th under Lieutenant Purbrick<sup>18</sup> was digging forward so as to meet it near the strong-point. Nothing was known of the left centre, where the right company of the 7th and the left of the 8th had possibly captured the enemy's trench. On these premises (which were far from correct) the 8th was asked by the brigadier to prepare a second attack, and was promised the support of the 5th. Shortly after midnight, hearing that the left of the 8th had on its own initiative attacked three times and been driven back with heavy loss, Forsyth altered his plan, and decided that the 5th should be sent to



*Situation as understood at 11.30.  
Attacks ordered are shown by Arrows.*

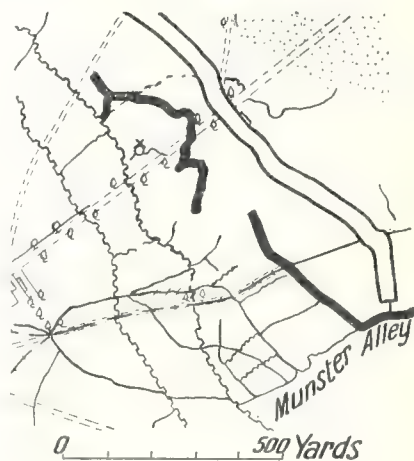
Munster Alley to bomb northwards from there, while part of the 7th Battalion bombed southwards from the forked road on the other flank.<sup>19</sup> At 3 a.m., however, receiving news that the right company of the 7th also had been repelled from the German line, the brigadier hurriedly countermanded the order for the attack from Munster Alley, which now offered no chance of success. The attempt from the north was to continue.

Such was the position at dawn. August 19th broke drizzly, with a Scotch mist, which rendered useless any

<sup>18</sup> Lieutenant Purbrick, who had taken part in the attack, dug from the "jumping-off" trench towards a line of trees which he took to be those on the main road. They proved to lie somewhat south of it. (Lieut. K. M. Purbrick, 7th Bn. Accountant; of Melbourne; b. East St. Kilda, Vic., 12 May, 1892.)

<sup>19</sup> That is, from the strong-point supposed to have been captured by the 6th.

attempt to reconnoitre by aeroplane. In the middle of the morning, however, the mist lightened, and the situation was immediately complicated by a report from the contact airman that Australian troops had been clearly seen waving their hands to him from what he believed to be the enemy trench. As these were imagined to be the lost company of the 7th, Captain Casey, "G.S.O.3"<sup>20</sup> of the 1st Division, went up with him on a second flight. His observations tended to confirm the report. Later in the day news from Fourth Army also reached corps headquarters of the evacuation by the Saxons of Switch Trench.<sup>21</sup> In these circumstances the higher Australian staffs insisted on the continuance of efforts to link with the troops supposed to be in the German trench. In vain Colonel Jess of the 7th Battalion pointed out that the trench must be in enemy hands, since the Germans were sniping from it and also picking up Australian wounded who lay in front. This evidence appears to have been doubted, until it was confirmed by that of a patrol which after dusk crept forward between the enemy listening posts until it could see the *pickelhaube* helmets of the garrison. Although it had by now been discovered that the 6th Battalion's advanced post was some distance short of the German position, corps headquarters still insisted upon a bombing attack, to be made from that post against the German trench.<sup>22</sup> Lying as it did on the hill-top and on the main road, the Australian post was a special target for the enemy's artillery, which more than once



Actual Situation, August 21.

<sup>20</sup> General staff officer charged with intelligence duties.

<sup>21</sup> See p. 779.

<sup>22</sup> The attack was at first to be made up an old German sap which ran from the lines of the 6th to the strong-post. The 6th, however, could not find it, shells having almost obliterated its course.



blew it up, killing and wounding the bombers stationed in it. In spite of this it was held and improved; but late on the 20th the proposed attack—a desperately impracticable project—was abandoned upon the discovery that there were only twenty-three bombers left in the 2nd Brigade.

The truth concerning the original attack is—as far as is now known—shortly as follows:

The 8th Battalion and half of the 7th had assembled during August 18th in the “jumping-off” trench, which was very narrow, but which hid them from the enemy. The left half of the 7th, in whose sector the forward work had not been completed, was to wait in the communication trench until shortly before the hour of attack, and then creep forward to align itself with the rest. The final order as to the barrage not having arrived, Captains Oates and Campbell,<sup>23</sup> Lieutenant Anthony,<sup>24</sup> Company Sergeant-Major Townsend<sup>25</sup> and Sergeant Stephen<sup>26</sup> of the 7th were waiting for it in this communication trench when, at 8.50 p.m., a shell exploded, putting Campbell and the N.C.O.’s out of action and half-burying Anthony. Oates ordered Anthony to take charge, but it was not until 9.10, when the British artillery had already been firing for ten minutes and the German guns were replying with a severe barrage, that a runner arrived with the order. Anthony at once hurried along the line, gave the order to fix bayonets, and the troops went over. Anthony himself and Lieutenants James<sup>27</sup> (the bomb officer) and Jenkin<sup>28</sup> were soon hit;<sup>29</sup> but, still led by Lieutenant Salthouse<sup>30</sup> and two sergeants, the left of the line reached the German strong-point at the fork of the road, and some

<sup>23</sup> Capt. W. B. Campbell, 7th Bn. School teacher; of Upper Murray district, Vic.; b. Granya, Vic., 10 June, 1885.

<sup>24</sup> Capt. H. C. Anthony, 7th Bn. Timber merchant; of East Malvern, Vic.; b. East Melbourne, 2 Nov., 1890. Died 2 Dec., 1922.

<sup>25</sup> C.S.-M. T. H. Townsend (No. 640; 7th Bn.). Engineer; of Footscray, Vic.; b. Heathcote, Vic., 1894.

<sup>26</sup> Sgt. C. P. Stephen (No. 605; 7th Bn.). Labourer; of Footscray, Vic.; b. Port Melbourne, 25 June, 1886.

<sup>27</sup> Lieut. W. H. James, 7th Bn. Watchmaker; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Melbourne, 1891.

<sup>28</sup> Lieut. W. Jenkin, 7th Bn. Surveyor; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 16 Aug., 1892. Killed in action, 19 Aug., 1916.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony was afterwards captured in a German trench.

<sup>30</sup> Lieut. A. L. Salthouse, 7th Bn. Insurance clerk; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Geelong, Vic., 19 Aug., 1893.

Australians entered the trench but were at once bombed out by the enemy. Lieutenant Kozminsky<sup>31</sup> was shot, and died on being brought in. The engineers and covering party of the 6th under Lieutenant Rauert,<sup>32</sup> who were already out near the fork of the road, saw this repulse, and Rauert therefore went back and arranged with the 7th to dig forward to his position, some distance short of the fork, which was never captured. North of the road a company of the 6th under Major Eller<sup>33</sup> continued the line towards The Elbow.

The centre and right of the attack appear to have followed the barrage, but probably somewhat too slowly through ignorance of its stages. They had gone more than 100 yards with little opposition when heavy fire opened. Lieutenant O'Kelly<sup>34</sup> rushed ahead intending to reach the trench before machine-guns could open, and succeeded in doing so, but most of his men were too late and, twice wounded, he was overpowered and captured. Elsewhere a few men entered the objective, but were killed fighting around a concrete shelter. It was afterwards said that in the heavy fusillade which had met the line a sergeant had shouted—"Come back, lads, it's no good." The troops fell back, but only to form again immediately and advance. In this advance also some reached the enemy trench, but could not hold on. Later a third attempt was made, and the neighbourhood of the trench must again have been reached by the leaders, since a wounded officer, Lieutenant Dabb,<sup>35</sup> was picked up later by the Germans—as were a few of the other wounded who lay outside their trench—and died as a prisoner of war.<sup>36</sup>

The trenches dug by the 2nd Brigade were not fully located by the Germans for a day or two, but were then very

<sup>31</sup> Lieut. M. E. Kozminsky, 7th Bn. Hat manufacturer; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. Melbourne, 14 May, 1884. Died of wounds, 19 Aug., 1916.

<sup>32</sup> Lieut. P. L. Rauert, M.C.; 6th Bn. Draper; of Kiata, Vic.; b. Sheep Hills, Vic., 7 Apr., 1891.

<sup>33</sup> Lieut.-Col. J. H. P. Eller, D.S.O.; 8th Bn. Secretary, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne; of Fitzroy, Vic.; b. Birregurra, Vic., 30 March, 1880.

<sup>34</sup> Lieut. L. C. O'Kelly, 8th Bn. School teacher; of Fish Creek and Waratah North, Vic.; b. Sale, Vic., 20 Dec., 1887.

<sup>35</sup> Lieut. R. H. Dabb, 8th Bn. Bank clerk; of Camperdown, Vic.; b. Murtoa, Vic., 18 Dec., 1895. Died of wounds, 26 Sept., 1916.

<sup>36</sup> No German account is available. The Saxons in this area fought well. The trench was eventually taken by the 2nd Canadian Battalion on September 9.



it would be necessary for its three other companies on the eastern front to be relieved during the day by the 1st Battalion and brought to the north. The actual advance would be made by parties of bombers and patrols, which would go forward under cover of a creeping barrage. These arrangements—except the time and other particulars of the barrage—were verbally explained by Smyth at Price's headquarters during the morning of the 18th.

The forward sapping which it had been intended to complete on the night of the 17th had to be largely foregone in favour of digging out the trenches broken in by the bombardment of the previous night; but the 4th Battalion had established a post in The Quarry and had also bombed to Point 55, but, being severely sniped, had given up that position. According to the final arrangements the heavy artillery of both I Anzac and II Corps was to pound the objectives and trenches immediately beyond them from 8 until 9, when the guns would lengthen range to allow the infantry to advance. Notice of the artillery arrangements reached the 1st Brigade by 7.30, just in time to be passed to the troops.

Although the correct line had now been reported, the heavy artillery, when attempting to bombard the northern objectives during that day,<sup>38</sup> had again severely shelled the front line of the 3rd Battalion. In answer to urgent messages, the artillery had stated that they were firing at the Fabeck Graben

after aeroplane registration. Most careful check has been made, and it appears these must be enemy shells.

The shooting, therefore, was not stopped, although the front trench of the 3rd Battalion continued to be repeatedly hit. The divisional staff suspected that the shells came from the enemy, but in the front line there was no doubt. The German "heavies" had not yet succeeded in ranging upon this part of the front line; their barrage fell on the supports.

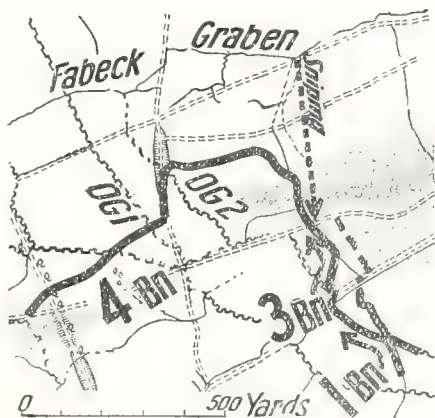
The preliminary movement of three companies of the 3rd Battalion was impeded by a German sniper, who fired straight into the communication trench at point-blank range, hitting a number of men. They were, however, in position when at

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<sup>38</sup> The heavy howitzers of I Anzac fired 900 shells during the day before 8 p.m. Those of the II Corps were firing farther west.



8 p.m. the "heavies" opened the preliminary fire. This bombardment—in which the I Anzac "heavies" alone used 1,000 shells—was disastrous to the operation. At 8.35 Price, who in order to be on the spot had moved his headquarters up to an old artillery position in No-Man's Land on the right of the front line, reported that the barrage was upon his front trench,



which is now almost demolished. I am doubtful whether we shall be able to carry out the stunt. . . . <sup>39</sup>

He ordered his parties to hold back while he despatched message after message asking that the range should be lengthened. About 10 o'clock this was done on his right front, and a reorganised party was sent forward. On approaching the objective it found there a strong party of Germans, who tried to outflank it. The Australian party withdrew, but an abandoned artillery position, well out in No-Man's Land, was occupied and held. A party sent out in the centre was driven back. On the left the barrage was not sufficiently raised, and Price held back his men.

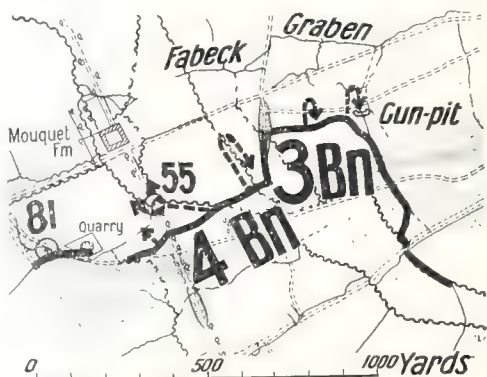


*German trench enclosing the Australian flank east of Mouquet Farm. The Australian trench (O.G.2) descended the hill (as indicated by arrow) and lay entirely open to the enemy's view.*

The 4th Battalion, though holding a sector more subject to enemy bombardment, had more success. It was noted by this battalion that the Germans opposing it on that day were fresh and "very superior" to those previously holding the front. In O.G.2 the bombers of the 4th, being unsupported

<sup>39</sup> The report issued by army and corps headquarters (based on an early theory of the 1st Divisional Staff) stated: "The right battalion apparently mistook very heavy German shell-fire for our own barrage."

by the 3rd, made no headway. In O.G.I., however, they drove back the Germans, and, had their riflemen supported them, might possibly have held on. But their supports were mainly reinforcements who had joined the battalion only a day or two previously to make good the losses incurred in the taking of Pozières. Plunged suddenly into the terrifying surroundings of a fierce night-battle in that bewildering area, they could not, despite the gallant efforts of Lieutenants Boileau and Isaacs,<sup>40</sup> be induced to come forward, and the bombers were thus forced to fall back. Farther to the left, however, Major Brown's company seized Point 55. Brown had avoided the German barrage by getting his men out into craters twenty yards ahead of the line. When the barrage fell, his bombing teams rushed forward to the two trenches at 55 and without much difficulty



suppressed the enemy bombers. Posts were established in both trenches, a covering post—six men with a Lewis gun under Corporal de Vine<sup>41</sup>—lying out twenty yards ahead and holding back several German thrusts while the others consolidated. The Germans counter-attacked both posts; in the western trench one volley of their bombs wounded Lieutenant Turnbull<sup>42</sup> and every man in post, but it was not followed up. Only a bare supply of grenades could be sent through to Brown's position, and the situation was at times anxious. But the line was reinforced by Major Rowlands and a company and a half of the 2nd; these and some engineers, who worked all night, succeeded in

<sup>40</sup> Capt. D. W. Isaacs, M.C.; 4th Bn. Surveyor; of Sydney; b. Petersham, N.S.W., 29 Nov., 1894.

<sup>41</sup> de Vine had been sent out by Brown during the day with Lieutenant Turnbull to ascertain the precise position of Mouquet Farm, which they did. [Sgt. A. L. de Vine (No. 330; 4th Bn.) Electrical engineer; of Maroubra, N.S.W.; b. St. Heliers, Jersey, 22 Apr., 1884.]

<sup>42</sup> Lieut. R. L. Turnbull, 4th Bn. Cook; of Summer Hill, N.S.W.; b. Grays, Essex, Eng., 12 Jan., 1891. Killed in action, 23 Dec., 1916.

establishing a new trench. A Vickers and several Lewis guns were brought up, and, as soon as there was sufficient light to shoot by, Brown withdrew his bombers. German snipers from some position very close inflicted a number of casualties. But the 4th held on to Point 55 (an important knot of trenches on the road just south of Mouquet Farm) as well as to the west of it, where the line was eventually connected with a small isolated post established by Corporal Hobson.<sup>43</sup> The flares lighted along the front at day-break enabled the contact airman to mark the situation with precision.

Thus at Mouquet Farm a second operation of extreme difficulty had resulted in one comparatively trivial gain—at Point 55. The 3rd Battalion had lost 9 officers and 151 others, at least half of them by bombardment from its own side; the 4th had lost 9 officers and 279 others.

Farther west, in the sector of the II Corps, the first of the methodical attacks by which the concavity in that part of the line was to be reduced was successful, the salient at Mouquet Farm being thus rendered a little less pronounced.

On the German side, the 16th Division reported immediately after this fight that it had put into the line all its reserves. The 69th Regiment (opposite the Anzac northern front) was now only 800 rifles strong, the 29th (opposite the 48th Division) still weaker. The 28th (opposite 48th and 49th Divisions) had reported that parts of the regiment were at the end of their tether. His reserves being used up, and his fighting strength being reduced to half, the divisional commander said he would no longer hold himself responsible for the defence of the second and third lines (the Zollern Trench, next on the north to the Fabeck Graben, and the Stauffen Redoubt near Grandcourt). He was informed on the 19th that the 15th R.I.R. (2nd Guard Reserve Division) had arrived on the outskirts of the battlefield, and it was placed under his orders.

The postponed attack upon the Fabeck Graben had still to be undertaken by the 1st Australian Division. Because of the exhaustion of the 1st Brigade<sup>44</sup> Walker decided to carry out this operation with the 3rd. Accordingly on August 19th the 1st Brigade was relieved by the 3rd, the 9th (Queensland) Battalion coming in on the left, the 12th

<sup>43</sup> Sgt. W. V. Hobson (No. 2822; 2nd Bn.). Labourer; of Hurlstone Park, N.S.W.; b. Rockdale, N.S.W., 19 Sept., 1891. Killed in action, 30 Sept., 1916.

<sup>44</sup> Young Howell-Price, however, sturdily reported on the 19th: "My trenches are in a fair state and the men are resting this morning. With this rest they will be capable of any action required of them."

(Tasmania, etc.) in the centre, and the 10th (South Australia) on the right;<sup>45</sup> the 11th (Western Australia) "carried" for the brigade. The 1st Battalion (1st Brigade) remained on the right, where throughout these operations it was continuing the process<sup>46</sup> of sapping forward and entrenching along its whole front so as to build up a new firing-line farther east.

It was now taken for granted that the German barrage falling on the crest north of Pozières during every attack—and occasionally during intervals of passivity—would destroy the two trenches there (Park Lane and Tom's Cut) no matter how regularly they were re-dug. Their destruction had the result of rendering the reliefs visible, unless they were carried out only at night, which, in that wilderness, was almost impossible. The communications had also to be remade before troops could be safely assembled for the next operation. The pioneers and engineers had lately done much work upon them,<sup>47</sup> and notice boards with the trench names and directions had been erected at short intervals. So circuitous, however, was the course of the left battalions, and so dreadful the spectacle of the dead along the route, that Colonel Elliott of the 12th, having visited the forward line during the morning, decided to send his two front-line companies (consisting largely of reinforcements) over the open

to minimise the possibility of their being demoralised by the revolting sights they would necessarily pass in going up by the trenches.<sup>48</sup>

The relief was shelled,<sup>49</sup> but most of the troops, whose movements in the foremost area took place after dusk, got through without heavy loss.

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<sup>45</sup> That is, on the right of the northern front (*see sketch on next page*).

<sup>46</sup> Begun by the 14th and 49th Battalions.

<sup>47</sup> Until August 16 the avenue almost exclusively used for approaching the northern front was Centre Way. By Aug. 20 a party of the 1st Pioneers, under Captain H. E. Townsend, had cleared the eastern end of Fourth Avenue (Ration Trench) as far as "K" Trench, and a covered approach had been made to it from First Avenue. Tramway Trench also had been extended to "K" Trench, and Park Lane improved. Alternative approaches were then provided as far as Park Lane and the O.G. Lines. Beyond that point "K" Trench was useless, and the only avenue to the left front was around O.G.2. Communication to the front near the windmill—almost equally difficult—was also improved, especially by the digging through of Sydney Street.

<sup>48</sup> *The Story of the Twelfth*, p. 230.

<sup>49</sup> A gun's crew of the 1st Machine Gun Company under Lieutenant J. G. Mackay were all killed or wounded when they were about to move off.



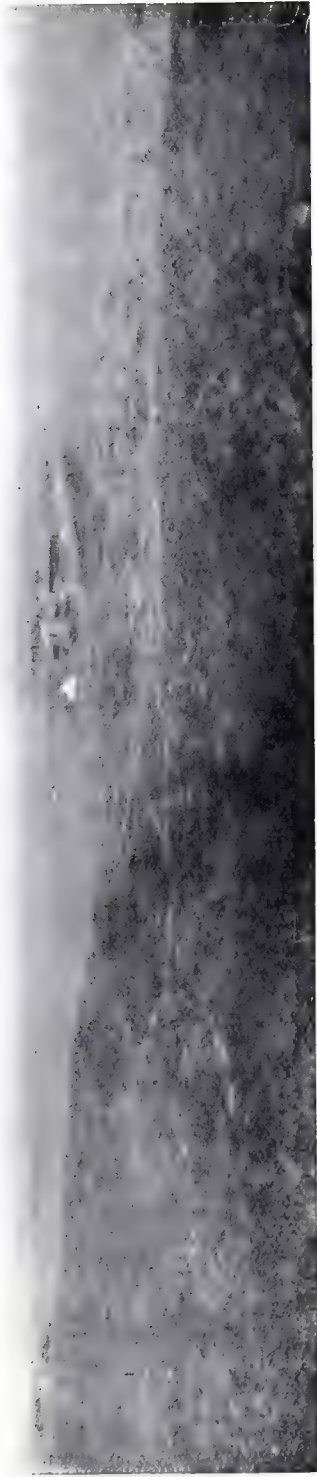


56. MACHINE-GUNNERS OF THE 2ND DIVISION COMING OUT OF POZIÈRES PAST "CASUALTY CORNER," 1ST AUGUST, 1916

The village in the background is Contalmaison.

*Inst. War Memorial Official Photo, No. E279.*

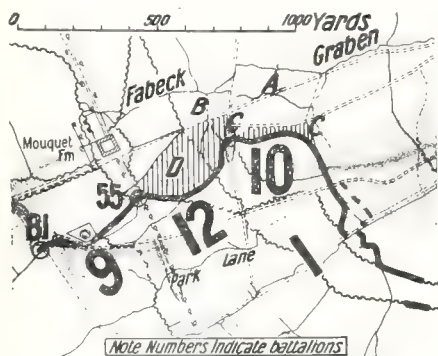
*To face p. 792.*



57. "POINT 54," THE "QUARRY," AND MOUQUET FARM

The view is from near "Park Lane," looking northwards across the valley. On the horizon on the extreme left was Thiepval; close below it is seen the section of road from near Point 81 to Point 54; in centre—The Quarry; near horizon on right—the rubble heaps of Mouquet Farm. (The ground in this picture is bare brown earth or mud. The photograph was taken on 11th October, 1916, some weeks after the eventual capture of the farm by the British. The tent at The Quarry did not exist at the time of the fighting.)

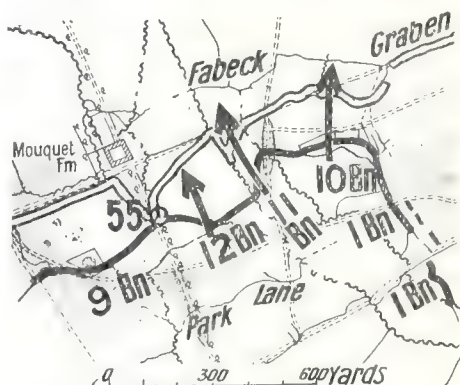
Writing to General Walker as to the objective for the forthcoming attack, General White suggested that, although the project might seem too half-hearted, the clearing of the enemy from the small space (shaded in the marginal sketch) south-west of the farm was probably all that the 1st Division with its reduced numbers could safely attempt. An attack upon the rectangle marked "A" in the marginal sketch, although this must obviously be the next operation of importance, would be imprudent unless the space "B" were also included in the objective;



moreover it would be desirable at the same time to attack the ground south-east and south-west of the farm. The core of these tactics—the retaining of the high ground—necessarily involved the pushing out of a salient, and a wide salient would be safer than a narrow one. The available force, however, would probably be insufficient to attempt more than the capture of the "jumping-off" position ("C-C") and of "D." Accordingly this operation, although admittedly too "half-hearted" to be entirely satisfactory, was what he recommended. Walker, however, being of opinion that the capture of a "jumping-off" position so close to the enemy would be no easier than the bigger effort, decided to attempt the capture of "A," "B," and "D." As a preliminary all the front-line battalions were on the night of August 19th to send out patrols to ascertain the position of the German outposts and, if possible, bomb them back, or at least gain some ground up to which the troops behind them might sap and so establish a "jumping-off" position. These plans miscarried; in the O.G. Lines and the trench north of 55 the German posts were much too strong. The patrol of the 10th could not find the new half-dug trench towards which it was despatched. Those from the 9th on this night could not penetrate the enemy posts in craters in front of them.

On the following night the 10th ascertained that the enemy was working in his new trench; but a bombardment of the objectives at 7.30 p.m. brought down an intense barrage from the enemy, and the working parties intended for the new forward trenches had again to be employed largely in digging out the existing ones. The front line, however, was now practically free from the bombardment of its own artillery, the heavy batteries taking the precaution of sending some of their own officers to the front line during the bombardments, and the guns having carefully re-registered on one landmark whose position was definitely known, namely, the stem of a tree on the Mouquet Farm-Courcelette road.<sup>50</sup> The other landmark in that wilderness—an abandoned waggon on the same road—was apparently either too near or too uncertainly located for the purpose.<sup>51</sup>

The 3rd Brigade's attack took place on August 21st, on which day a division of the XIV Corps attempted another thrust at Guillemont, but without success. The attack on Mouquet Farm—for the first time in the case of any Australian operation on this battlefield—took place by plain daylight. The preparation had included three surprise bombardments, rehearsals of the intended barrage,<sup>52</sup> and bombardment by the heavy artillery for an hour (1.30 to 2.30) on August 21st and at other times. The barrage covering the attack was a "creeping" one, resting for two minutes half-way to the Fabeck Graben, then for three minutes upon it, and then lifting beyond. To strengthen



*The plan of attack. (Main objective—Fabeck Graben. German front line shown in white.)*

<sup>50</sup> Part of the firing line was also specially surveyed on August 21 by Lieutenant L. R. Blake, 5th A.F.A. Brigade. (Blake belonged to Brisbane, and had been a member of the Mawson expedition to the Antarctic.)

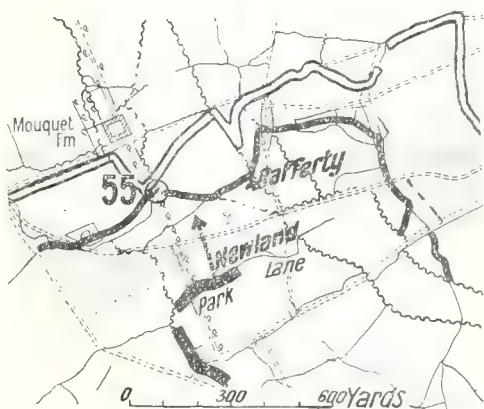
<sup>51</sup> Some of the field artillery attempted to register their guns by aeroplane. Firing was, however, so constant in this area that the observer apparently mistook the shells. The battery knew (by the range at which it was firing) that the airman's corrections could not refer to its shooting.

<sup>52</sup> At 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. on August 20, and 5 a.m. on the 21st.



the attacking force, the 11th Battalion was made responsible for linking the 10th with the 12th by sending two parties, each of 100 men, up the O.G. Lines. These, as well as certain companies of the 10th and 12th, would have to be brought forward during the late morning and in the afternoon.

This movement, which began as far back as Sausage Valley and La Boisselle, was seen by the enemy, who put down a barrage upon the reserve companies of the 12th moving up through "K" Trench. Arriving at the point where that dipped to The Quarry in full view of the enemy, the commander of the leading company, Captain Newland,<sup>53</sup> ran down the gully to reconnoitre, and arranged with Major Rafferty (in charge of the firing line of the 12th near Point 55) to bring down the two companies over the open. Rafferty meanwhile promised to get his own men out into the shell-holes so that the front line would be empty to receive the reserves.



Between 5.15 and 5.30 p.m. this dash to the front line was made.

The whole line (writes Colonel Elliott<sup>54</sup>) jumped the parapet and plunged headlong into the gully in extended order. This was dead ground, and they were enabled to go slowly, but as soon as they came to the crest of the next ridge (*i.e.*, near 55), where the firing line was situated, they had to do the fifty yards in double quick time, and fairly fell into the trench. This left them about half an hour only in which to organise the attack.

Under such circumstances it was of course vain to expect that the enemy would be surprised. He must indeed have observed earlier movement on the ridge, for at 5 o'clock his artillery-fire descended on the 10th Battalion so sharply that

<sup>53</sup> Capt. J. E. Newland, V.C.; 12th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Highton, Vic., 22 Aug., 1881.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted from *The Story of the Twelfth*, by L. M. Newton (who himself took part in this incident).

120 officers and men were killed or wounded in the hour preceding the assault. Meanwhile the two parties of the 11th should have been assembling between the 10th and 12th; but the battalion had been "carrying" for the brigade, and its men had not been returned to their headquarters near La Boisselle until 3.15 p.m. At 4.15 they were on their way to the front, but still far back at the Chalk Pit dump, receiving bombs and supplies. They had then to pass through the barrage called down by the movements of the 12th. About the time when the attack started, the head of the party—Captain Le Nay with twenty men—struggled through to Major Rafferty's headquarters (a dugout near 55). The gap existing through their non-arrival was being guarded, on Rafferty's orders, by a small platoon of the 12th under Lieutenant E. L. A. Butler,<sup>55</sup> and Le Nay was therefore sent thither. But he was wounded almost at once. Lieutenant Hallahan, leading the next batch of the 11th, and Lieutenant Clarke,<sup>56</sup> the bombing officer, were twice half-buried by shells on their way up and did not arrive until three-quarters of an hour after the other battalions had attacked, when all was confusion and an immediate start impossible.

The probability that the 11th might be late had been recognised by General MacLagan, who accordingly at 3.35 had ordered the 9th Battalion (which was on the left and not taking part) to send half its reserve company to act instead of the 11th if necessary. Five minutes before 6 this company had reached the starting position, but found the trenches filled with men of the 11th (probably Le Nay's party) and engineers, and was informed that it would not be required.<sup>57</sup>

Although the advance of the 11th between the 10th and 12th did not take place, those two battalions moved forward punctually. It was again remarked that the artillery covered the attack with an excellent barrage, "as though they had laid off a quadrangle in the sky," an officer said afterwards.

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<sup>55</sup> Lieut. E. L. A. Butler, 12th Bn. Lawyer; of Hobart; b. Hobart, 10 Apr., 1883. Died of wounds, 23 Aug., 1916.

<sup>56</sup> Lieut. R. A. Clarke, M.C.; 11th Bn. Farmer; of Roelands, W. Aust.; b. Bunbury, W. Aust., 18 June, 1889.

<sup>57</sup> Its commander kept his troops there and sent to the headquarters of the 9th for instructions; Colonel Robertson referred to the brigadier, and was directed to withdraw the platoons, since they might be required to support the 10th.

The 3rd Machine Gun Company also had its fourteen available guns firing from the rear high over the heads of the infantry, thus laying down a barrage of machine-gun bullets well beyond the objective.<sup>58</sup> The two flanks were to have been protected by screens of smoke flung out by trench-mortars of the "Special Brigade" of Royal Engineers. The officer-in-charge, however, reported that the state of the communications prevented the mortars and ammunition from reaching their intended positions, and the infantry therefore went forward without this defence. As before, the moment the troops on the ridge started, Germans in front and on the right front opened fire through the barrage. The 10th, which in the enemy's bombardment from 5 to 6 p.m. had lost 120 of its 620 officers and men, had naturally been shaken. Its attacking waves, though hurriedly reinforced from its reserve company, had at the last moment to be reduced, through losses, from four to two. In this bombardment and in the advance, all the officers except one were hit,<sup>59</sup> but the troops—under Lieutenants Hill<sup>60</sup> and Dey,<sup>61</sup> Sergeant Badger,<sup>62</sup> and others—passed, in accordance with their orders, over the advanced trench newly dug by the enemy and hurried on towards the Fabeck Graben. Some, not finding the first trench (which was unfinished), appear to have passed over the second trench, which they mistook for it, and continued on, searching for the Fabeck Graben until they were stopped by the British barrage, which they afterwards described as tremendous; others were stopped just as they reached the entanglement of the Fabeck Graben. Others again appear

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<sup>58</sup> The company fired 36,500 rounds in three hours and another 14,500 during the night. Its shortest bullets would fall fifty yards beyond the farm.

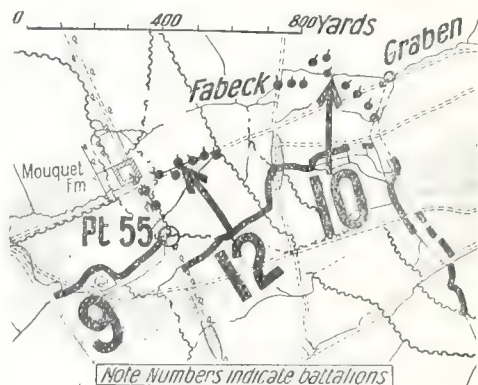
<sup>59</sup> At this early stage Lieutenant W. W. Baker had been killed, and Lieutenants J. Davidson, S. W. Coombe, D. Chisholm, H. W. Lynch, H. W. Crowle, A. R. Walker, and E. Kent wounded. The reserve officers were therefore sent for and arrived at 2.50 a.m. But one of them, Lieutenant A. E. Willmer, was wounded on the way up. (Baker and Davidson belonged to Adelaide; Coombe to Renmark, S. Aust.; Chisholm and Lynch to Broken Hill, N.S.W.; Crowle to North Adelaide; Walker to Mount Gambier, S. Aust.; Kent, who died a few hours later, to Unley; and Willmer to North Norwood, S. Aust.)

<sup>60</sup> Lieut. A. T. Hill, M.C.; 10th Bn. Miner; of Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Northfield, Worces., Eng., 1891. Died of wounds, 30 May, 1918.

<sup>61</sup> Lieut. G. R. McG. Dey, 10th Bn. Bank clerk; of Semaphore, S. Aust.; b. Winninnie Station, S. Aust., 8 Jan., 1891. Killed in action, 22 Aug., 1916.

<sup>62</sup> Sgt. D. G. J. Badger (No. 18808; 10th Bn.). Bank clerk; of Peterborough, S. Aust.; b. Peterborough, 14 Apr., 1896. Killed in action, 21 Aug., 1916. (In a letter afterwards received by his parents, he had written: "When you see this I'll be dead; don't worry. . . . Try to think I did the only possible thing, as I tell you I would do it again if I had the chance. Send someone else in my place.")

to have occupied certain lengths of it; but on the extreme right, where the trench met the Courcelette road, a German machine-gun post prevented approach to that sector. Major Redburg,<sup>63</sup> who commanded the 10th in this attack,<sup>64</sup> hearing that the right was held up, sent the rest of his reserve company to help it. The fight was, however, already lost. Almost isolated, with the enemy on and behind both flanks, the 10th fell back at dusk, and, receiving the reserve company of the 9th as a support, dug a line on or slightly in



advance of the "jumping-off" position. Some of those who had gone farthest, however, had on attempting to retire found the Germans behind them, in parts of the first enemy trench. Several parties thus cut off held out in craters till morning, when, being without support and surrounded, the survivors surrendered. In the Australian lines during the night much confusion and mixture of units had necessarily occurred. The true position on the front of the 10th was not very promptly ascertained or recognised, with the result that at 6 next morning the staffs of corps and division were still left under the impression that part of Fabeck Trench was held, a belief which had unfortunate consequences.<sup>65</sup>

In the O.G. Lines, owing to the late arrival of the 11th, there was until after midnight no attack. West of them the officers of the 12th had just arranged their waves<sup>66</sup> when the barrage began. Waiting till the first lift (two minutes), Captain Newland gave the word, and the first wave went

<sup>63</sup> Maj. (temp. Lieut.-Col.) G. E. Redburg, 10th Bn. Factory manager; of Norwood, S. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 8 Oct., 1881.

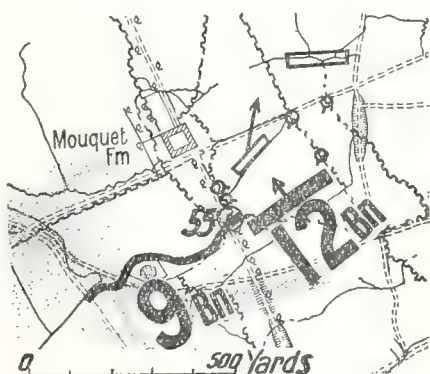
<sup>64</sup> Colonel Price Weir, the senior Australian regimental commander, though he had actively led his unit through most of the Anzac fighting, found the lack of sleep at Pozières too trying for him, and was forced to ask for relief.

<sup>65</sup> See p. 801.

<sup>66</sup> The two newly-arrived companies (left and right) formed the first two waves, each having two platoons in each wave. The former front-line companies provided a third wave—to support the first and second—and a "fourth," which held the old front line.



over in excellent line, advancing quickly with its right, led by Lieutenant Newton,<sup>67</sup> directed along the wire of O.G.I. The Germans in a diagonal trench, 150 yards out, fled to a farther trench as the Tasmanians approached. Some of the latter followed and cleared the enemy from that shelter also, being with difficulty recalled by Newland and set to dig on their proper objective. Hostile fire was coming from the right both from the higher part of the ridge in front of the 10th, and from posts near by, on the Courcelette road. Captain Love,<sup>68</sup> commanding the left company, and Lieutenant Newton were hit, but Lieutenants Roper<sup>69</sup> and Hearps<sup>70</sup> took forward the left of the line, meeting little opposition in that crater-field. A section of bombers under Lance-Corporal Lord,<sup>71</sup> pushing northwards from Point 55 through the trench beside the Mouquet Farm-Pozières road, bombed several dugouts and, presently reaching the rubble heaps of the farm, threw bombs into its gaping cellars. Hearps, who followed with some of his men, was here seriously wounded by the British barrage, which lay upon the farm. Few Germans were seen, and Newland about dusk reported the farm captured. Meanwhile the German posts on the right had been cleared, one of them by a private named Manser,<sup>72</sup> who, seeing several Germans where O.G.I crossed the Courcelette road (at Point 91), had made straight for them with a few men and captured a machine-gun.<sup>73</sup>



<sup>67</sup> Capt. L. M. Newton, M.C.; 12th Bn. Accountant; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Southend-on-Sea, Essex, Eng., 13 Dec., 1892.

<sup>68</sup> Capt. A. Love, 12th Bn. Hairdresser; b. Colne, Lancs., Eng., 10 June, 1889.

<sup>69</sup> Lieut. O. J. Roper, 12th Bn. Clerk; of Hobart, Tas.; b. New Town, Tas., 4 Sept., 1890.

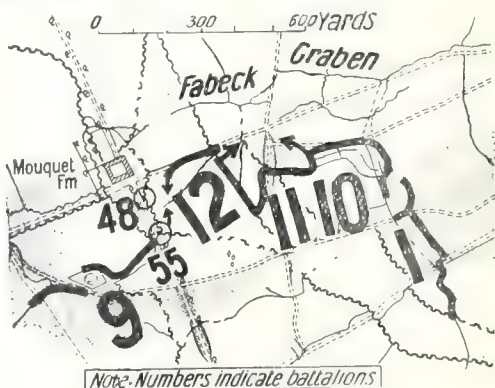
<sup>70</sup> Lieut. A. J. Hearps, 12th Bn. Clerk; of Queenstown, Tas.; b. Forth, Tas., 1895. Died of wounds, 22 Aug., 1916.

<sup>71</sup> Cpl. H. E. Lord (No. 84; 12th Bn.). Woolclasser; of New Town, Tas.; b. New Town, 22 Aug., 1894. Killed in action, 25 Aug., 1918.

<sup>72</sup> Sgt. F. Manser, M.M. (No. 163; 12th Bn.). Labourer; of Hobart, Tas.; b. Launceston, Tas., 1892.

<sup>73</sup> Another post was cleared by Corporal A. F. Adams (of Alonnah, Tas.).

The 12th thus appeared to have occupied considerably more than its objective. Later in the night, however, Captain Vowles, who had been summoned from the battalion's reserve of officers to take the place of Love, was making his way up the trench north of 55, previously penetrated by the bombers, when he met two Germans walking down it. He fired, and escaped eastwards to Newland's line. The men who were digging this line also found themselves sniped at from very close at hand as they sapped towards that trench. The enemy had evidently emerged from his dugouts and reoccupied it,<sup>74</sup> and the digging parties were therefore directed to avoid it in the way shown in the marginal sketch. The bombers had withdrawn from the farm. Lieutenant Hearps, with another Australian and some German wounded, was left in a dugout, where the enemy, reappearing, captured them.<sup>75</sup>



*Direction of Digging by 12th and 11th Battalions indicated by Arrows.*

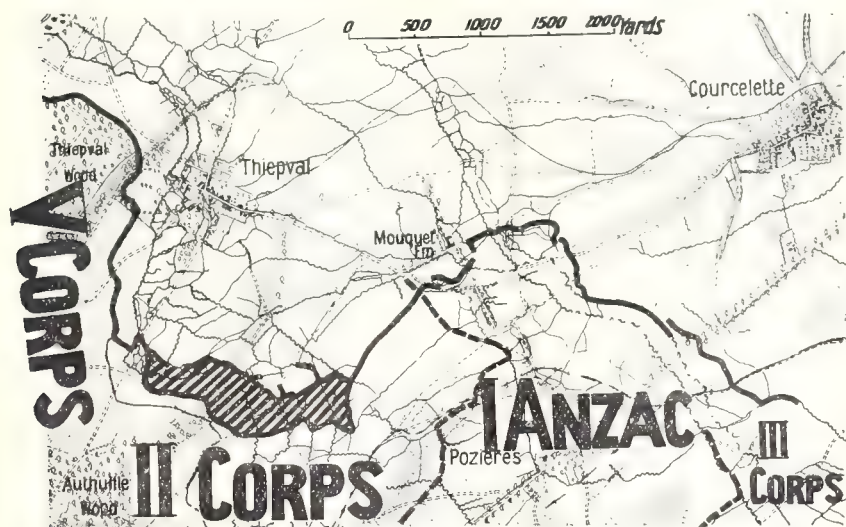
The 12th had thus established a small salient almost touching the south-eastern corner of the farm. The 10th, after falling back, dug in a few yards in advance of the previous line on the crest. Parties of the 11th, reorganised in the early morning by Lieutenants Hallahan, Belford, and other officers,<sup>76</sup> dug a line joining the two. In the white morning mist, which transformed the landscape into a patch of lonely moorland, the men were able to work strung out across the open. From somewhere

<sup>74</sup> Somewhat similar incidents had on several occasions happened at this point (48) and they recurred later. The trench contained two or more deep dugouts lying almost beneath the tree-stumps on the road. These dugouts were so close to Point 55 that their existence was often unsuspected. A man of the 4th and two of the 9th, sent out on errands, had already mysteriously disappeared near this point; they had been captured by the Germans hidden there.

<sup>75</sup> Stretcher-bearers had been sent for, but they did not arrive. Hearps died shortly after capture.

<sup>76</sup> Captain L. L. Le Nay (of Meckering, W. Aust.) and Captain J. S. D. Walker (of Woollahra, N.S.W., and Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.) in charge of the 11th having been successively wounded, Captain R. Hemingway (of Albany, W. Aust.) was sent up on the 22nd.

back in Sausage Valley a single British battery, barking once every few minutes, flung its salvo—the last remnant of the barrage—a few hundred yards out to the north-east; at similar intervals a single German shell spat the same distance to the south-west. Under these strange echoes the men worked quickly and in comfort until the mist began to thin and shots coming from it at short range began to wound and kill the diggers. Two pick-handles were then stuck up above the points reached by the 11th and 12th respectively, and the 11th sapped from one to the other. The front line was thus at last complete. Far ahead of it the morning aeroplane saw some of the 10th still holding out in craters; and the higher commanders, having been led to believe that the objective had been occupied throughout the night, naturally insisted that “the position must be cleared up” before the 1st Division was relieved. An order was therefore issued for an attempt—quite impossible in the actual conditions—to reach Point 73<sup>77</sup> by bombing. Long before it could be organised the survivors (though this was not known at headquarters) had surrendered. Lieutenant Clarke and a party of the 11th made a sally over the crater-field north of Point 91. They met with strong opposition and returned with slight loss.



*The Area taken by II Corps since August 17 is shaded.*

<sup>77</sup> At the junction of Fabeck Graben and O.G.1 (see p. 810).

In the II Corps area, the second stage of the operations designed to effect a second reduction in the concavity south of Thiepval had succeeded to the extent shown in the sketch.

On the German side, the assaults by the II Corps and I Anzac had fallen mainly on the 28th, 68th, and 69th Regiments of the 16th Division, still holding the line. In the Leipzig Salient the 28th in protracted bombfighting kept the British from some of their objectives, but lost nearly 200 prisoners. At Mouquet Farm an advance of the Australians between the farm and sunken road in "Süd V" was admitted. The front there appears to have been held by the I/69th, brought back to the line for the third time within a fortnight. The German troops on the eastern flank, including probably those in front of the 10th Battalion, belonged to the 24th (Saxon) Division, which reported the capture of 33 Australians.

On August 22nd the 1st Australian Division was relieved. The 3rd Brigade had lost 840 in front of Mouquet Farm.<sup>78</sup> The 1st Division in this tour had lost 92 officers and 2,558 other ranks. The progress achieved in its two attacks along the ridge had been trifling; the task—which had indeed long since reached the stage where further progress became impossible—was now handed on to the 2nd Australian Division.

<sup>78</sup> The detailed losses were:

			Killed Off. O.R.		Wounded Off. O.R.		Missing Off. O.R.		Total Off. O.R.
Bde. H.Q.	..	..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
9th Bn.	..	..	3	24	2	110	—	24	5 158
10th Bn.	..	..	3	48	6	165	1	112	10 325
11th Bn.	..	..	—	14	3	44	—	18	3 76
12th Bn.	..	..	—	42	3	148	1	48	4 238
3rd M.G. Coy.	..	..	—	—	—	8	—	—	— 8
3rd L.T.M. Bty.	..	..	—	—	—	13	—	—	— 13



## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE LAST ATTACKS ON THE FARM

THE front of the I Anzac Corps, originally a mile in extent, had been stretched by the northward thrust to 4,100 yards—more than two miles and a quarter. This was still held by one division, with one brigade holding 1,600 yards in front of the windmill and a second 2,600 yards on the north-eastern and northern face of the salient. General White insisted on constant precautions to meet the danger of a German attack against the protracted flank, but the precautions took the form of increasing not the infantry garrison, but the artillery,<sup>1</sup> and of multiplying the defences. In the dreadful school of the first tour at Pozières, the divisions had gradually learnt the lesson seldom afterwards forgotten—not to overcrowd the front line. The garrison of the northern brigade's front eventually<sup>2</sup> fell as low as four companies, three being on the northern and one on the eastern face. Other companies were in support nearly half-a-mile back in Park Lane, Tom's Cut, "K" Trench, and Centre Way; the remainder, including the reserve battalion, which usually provided carrying parties for the brigade, extended as far in rear as Sausage Valley and La Boisselle.

The heavy losses in the first Pozières also naturally inclined the Anzac leaders at this time towards a contemporary theory (partly founded on reports of the German operations at Verdun) that in attack, provided the artillery preparation had been thorough, the infantry need not be thrown in so strongly as had been the custom with the British Army. The short narrow advances prescribed at this stage of the Somme battle

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<sup>1</sup> On Aug. 18 two brigades of the field artillery of the 2nd Division had come into the line, making seven in all behind the corps front. On Aug. 23, when two other brigades of that division relieved two of the 1st Division, the supporting artillery comprised three brigades of the Lahore Divisional Artillery and four of the 2nd Australian Division. Of the latter, two were now in Mash Valley, except in battle barrages, the Lahore brigades covered the northern, and the Australian the eastern, front.

<sup>2</sup> By the beginning of September. On Aug. 27 one battalion, the 15th, actually held from Mouquet Farm nearly to The Elbow—1,500 yards. This was recognised as being too wide a front, and a battalion of the 7th Brigade was sent up to take over its right sector.

were almost invariably followed by frightful casualties when the enemy turned his guns—which were not captured or even disturbed—upon the newly-won positions. Efforts were usually made to avoid this result by hurrying on the work of “consolidation,” and then sending back a large proportion of the front-line troops before the enemy’s guns had time to register and pound the new front line. But at this stage of the war there was also a definite policy of attempting to avoid such losses by using lighter forces in the attack. Moreover, it was a matter of great difficulty, if not a sheer impossibility, to assemble 2,000 men at the head of this salient without the knowledge of the enemy. If, therefore, success could be obtained with light forces after strong bombardment, a welcome solution would be afforded. The rapid advance of the 4th Division towards Mouquet Farm, carried out with comparatively light forces, gave confidence in the method; and, although the defences near the farm were obviously stronger than those encountered during the advance, their strength was as yet uncertain, and they were still attacked with formations very much thinner than those which stormed Pozières and the Pozières heights. Thus, whereas at Pozières a front of 1,500 yards had been attacked by two full brigades, and the capture of the O.G. Lines and Brind’s Road—2,000 yards—had been effected by seven or eight battalions, in no instance had a whole brigade been thrown against the 1,500 yards of enemy front at Mouquet Farm. The forces employed had thus far been:

August 14th (front, 1,500 yards)—3 battalions;

August 18th (front, 1,000 yards)—2 battalions;

August 21st (front, 1,000 yards)—2½ battalions.

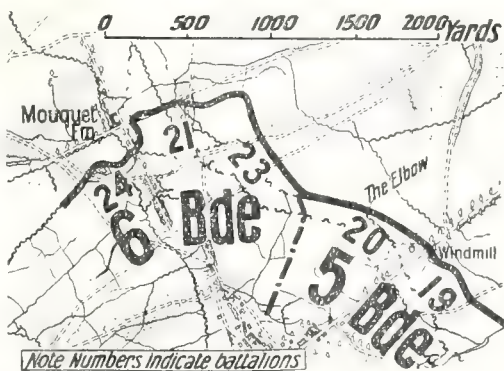
Moreover, from August 18th onwards all the battalions employed had been serving their second tour in this battle-line; consequently their strength rarely exceeded 600 rifles and sometimes fell short of it. G.H.Q. was responsible for the tactics which occasioned recourse to this policy, but not for the policy itself. Reference has already been made to a letter<sup>3</sup> in which Haig warned his army commanders that economy was to be sought, not by using forces too weak for

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<sup>3</sup> See p. 648.

success, but by carefully selecting objectives and employing sufficient troops to capture and hold them. It is doubtful, however, if this warning had penetrated as far as the Anzac staff.

The 2nd Australian Division, which returned to the line after a fortnight's rest, had already lost over 6,200 of its infantry<sup>4</sup> in the two attacks upon Pozières heights. The 6th Brigade under Gellibrand had suffered least,<sup>5</sup> and was therefore chosen for the next stroke of the battering ram against the farm. Upon Gellibrand pointing out that only one of his battalions, the 21st, was strong enough for fighting of this nature, it was decided to limit the attempt to an advance on one side of the farm. Ascertaining from Colonel Blamey, chief of staff of the 1st Division, that the thrust would probably be, as heretofore, east of the farm, Gellibrand allotted that sector to the 21st, with the 24th on its left, the 23rd holding the long eastern flank, and the 22nd carrying. The front east of Pozières was held by the 5th Brigade, and the 7th was employed in digging communication trenches.<sup>6</sup> The 6th Brigade relieved the 3rd in the late afternoon and night of August 22nd.



These weeks were marked by great aeroplane activity over the battlefield, the Allies—on some days with at least fifty machines simultaneously in the sky—endeavouring, still with much success, to maintain their local supremacy. But on this afternoon several German aeroplanes were overhead, and either from the ground or from the air the relieving battalions of the 6th Brigade were detected. At 6 p.m. a heavy barrage

<sup>4</sup> The total loss of the division was 6,848. See p. 724.

<sup>5</sup> The fighting strength of its battalions on Aug. 22 was roughly: 21st—about 700; 22nd—365; 23rd and 24th—each about 600.

<sup>6</sup> Some of the working parties of the 7th Brigade had to march seven miles from the Albert brickfields, and to return thither after their daily or nightly tasks.

of shrapnel and high explosive was thrown by the Germans upon the whole area from Mouquet Farm to Pozières, lasting till midnight. The 24th Battalion, which had lost so heavily in "K" Trench four weeks earlier, was again caught. The guide for one company was killed, and its officers had to grope forward as best they could through the moonless night. The Quarry was crowded with wounded; the last platoon of the 12th was not relieved until dawn.<sup>7</sup>

The time was now approaching for very important operations. It has been explained that the piecemeal<sup>8</sup> tactics inaugurated on July 23rd were only to continue until certain secret instruments—and fresh troops—were available for resuming a wider offensive. On August 16th Haig informed his army commanders that the instruments in question—heavy armoured "caterpillar" cars which, for secrecy, had been referred to in correspondence as "water tanks"<sup>9</sup>—would shortly reach France, and that the new offensive, in connection with which they would be used, would probably take place in the middle of September. It was hoped that this attack might at last break through the German front and enable the British to "roll it up." Before it could be prudently launched, however, Ginchy and Guillemont, so often assaulted by the right of the British army, must be captured. On the left of the battlefield the one important preparatory measure must be the seizure of the Thiepval-Pozières ridge. It was arranged with the French that combined operations against Ginchy, Guillemont, and the area south-east of them should be undertaken on August 28th or 29th after a preliminary attack on the 24th. Gough was asked to make the Thiepval operations, if he could conveniently do so, simultaneous with the Fourth Army's attack.

The plans for the next attack on Mouquet Farm contemplated—contrary to the impression at first obtained by General

<sup>7</sup> The young officer in charge of this platoon, Lieut. E. L. A. Butler, a well-loved Tasmanian cricketer, being mortally wounded in this barrage, and several of his men hit, the medical officer of the 12th, Capt. W. W. S. Johnston (of Melbourne) went forward again through the barrage and attended to them. In the 24th, Lieut. W. A. Coward (of Clare, S. Aust.), a Duntroon graduate, was among those killed in the same bombardment.

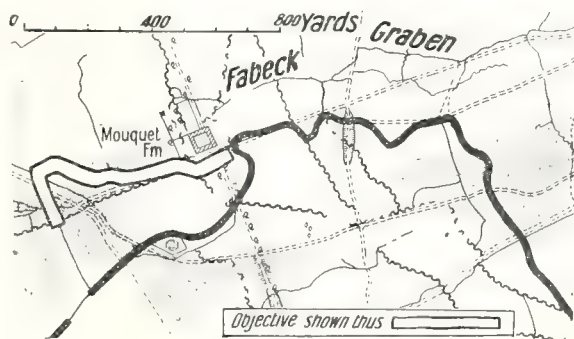
<sup>8</sup> See p. 529.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the orders of the Q.M.G.'s department at G.H.Q. notified the arrival at Le Havre from England on Aug. 25 of "No. 2 Water Tank Coy." and "14 1-ton tanks." These orders were seen by many, but the true nature of the so-called "Tanks" was known to few, and the secret was excellently kept.



Gellibrand—a thrust on its *western* side. General White, holding the principle that it was useless to renew a defeated attack without changing the method,<sup>10</sup> had on August 22nd, in a letter to the staff of the 2nd Division, laid down that, for the moment, the position already gained on the high ground (*i.e.*, east of the farm) must be consolidated, and the attack must be aimed at the lower objectives, shown in the marginal sketch. At the same time, in view of the urgent

need of securing the higher ground ahead, the 2nd Division was directed to lose no opportunity of advancing towards the Fabeck Graben (known at that time as "High Trench"), east of the farm, even if



only by bombing. The following day, in a letter to the commanders of the 2nd and 4th Divisions, White explained the further plans. When the 2nd had straightened the line in front of the farm, the 4th would come in on its left and—presumably on the same day as the main assault on Guillemont—would thrust a further 500 yards towards the Zollern Redoubt. This plan, however, could only be carried out if the II Corps, either earlier or at the same time, attacked on the immediate left.<sup>11</sup>

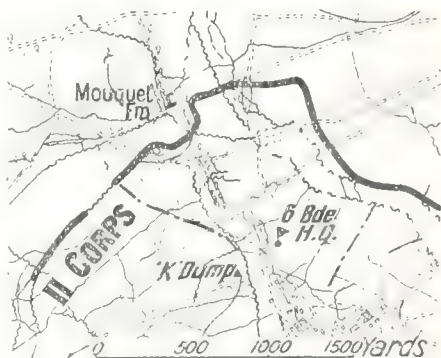
These orders, of which the relevant part reached Gellibrand on August 23rd, placed him in a very awkward position. He had now, it is true, little doubt that the plan of attacking west of the farm was the right one, since it avoided the extreme exposure of the right flank to the enemy east of the salient. But unfortunately he had placed his only fit battalion—the 21st—on the wrong side of the farm; to employ the 24th after its sufferings in the barrage of July 27th and

<sup>10</sup> It was held that the two previous attempts along the ridge had failed through the exposure of the troops to German artillery-fire, presumably before the actual attacks. This assumption was not altogether justified.

<sup>11</sup> That is, against the Konstanzer Graben, north of Skyline Trench.

August 22nd was out of the question. It only remained for the two battalions to change places in the line; and on the afternoon of August 24th, by an elaborate series of moves resembling the shunting of trucks in a congested railway-yard, this remarkable transposition was carried through practically without loss. Of incalculable advantage for quick consultation with the front line was the fact that Gellibrand had insisted upon moving his brigade headquarters a mile and three-quarters nearer the front, to a dugout near Pozières cemetery. The almost overwhelming difficulties of supply had also been eased by two new measures: first, General Legge had arranged that his infantry should take with them into the line rations for forty-eight hours; second, the pioneers had extended the tramway to the head of Mash Valley near the cemetery, and Captain Norman, Gellibrand's staff-captain, had obtained leave to advance to that point the brigade supply-dépôt—afterwards known as "K Dump." Nevertheless, the German barrages—especially one on August 25th, which is said to have killed or wounded ninety-six men in a single company of the 21st—were so severe that the carriage of supplies through the forward area could be maintained only with difficulty.<sup>12</sup>

It was recognised—by no one more certainly than by General Legge—that before any operation better communications must be provided. The 7th Brigade dug an excellent trench down the exposed slope near the line of the



<sup>12</sup> On Aug. 24, for example, Lieut. O. A. Jones of the 21st started from the Chalk Pit with ninety men carrying bombs, small arm ammunition, flares, and water. Some were left half-way at "K" Dump; but fifty continued on. At Park Lane they were divided into tens, because the Germans would be able to see them descending the slope beyond. Jones and the first ten got through, and also part of the second ten; two-and-a-half hours later Lieut. A. N. McLennan (of Melbourne) of the 22nd arrived with eight or nine more. No others came through the barrage. The men were blown down or half-buried more often than seriously wounded. The work of the signallers was at least equally difficult. Although five "laddered" lines were laid to The Quarry for use in the coming attack, they broke down immediately the operation began.

old "K," but within two days it had been shattered by German shell-fire. Another essential was to ascertain the precise position of the opposing front lines immediately south of Mouquet Farm, which was still uncertain. Although Lieutenant Monteath of the 9th and others had passed without interference through the trench at Point 48 (beside the Pozières road south of Mouquet Farm),<sup>13</sup> Germans had afterwards appeared in it. Australians had even entered the farm rubble-heaps without molestation, but at other times a machine-gun fired there, though protected (it was thought) only by a handful of Germans who busily threw flares. With a view to resolving some of this uncertainty, the 6th Brigade on the nights of August 23rd and 24th sent out patrols, which ran into the Germans all along High Trench (Fabeck Graben) and in front of it, but met less resistance west of the farm. As to the farm itself, reports were utterly conflicting. On the night of the 23rd a supposed strong-point near its north-east corner was visited and reported unoccupied. The 24th Battalion established a bombing-post in a large crater almost touching the south-eastern rubble-heap. Yet on one occasion the front-line troops saw several hundred Germans filing over the ridge through the damaged Fabeck Graben towards the farm. In spite of deadly fire from the Victorians they reached a point near the northern heaps, and then disappeared. While, therefore, some Australians were convinced that the place was practically empty, others maintained that it was a warren of strongly-garrisoned underground works. At a conference of his regimental commanders, Gellibrand asked whether the 21st would by a patrol attempt to seize the machine-gun reported to fire from a dugout south of the farm. Receiving the answer that it was impossible, he unguardedly asked Major Hore of the 6th Machine Gun Company whether any of his men would care to try. The machine-gunners accepted, and crept to the dugout, but without finding the gun;<sup>14</sup> but the incident had another result,

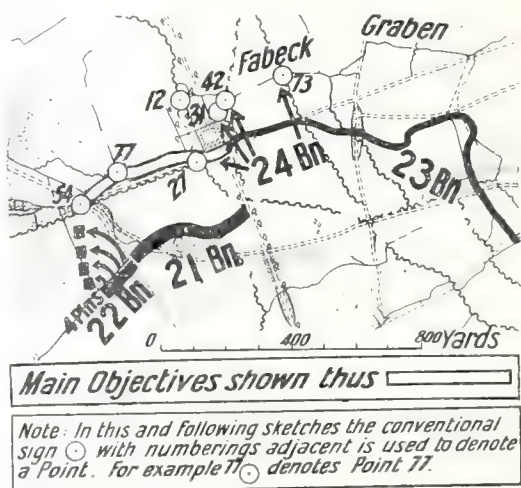
<sup>13</sup> See note 74 on p. 800, and plate No. 60.

<sup>14</sup> The patrol consisted of Privates F. Wigmore (of Bridgewater-on-Loddon, Vic.), L. G. Byrnes (of Nyah district, Vic.), and J. E. Smith (of Melbourne). Wigmore had visited the dugout at noon on Aug. 24. The patrol went out the following night, and on its way back perceived four Germans in a crater with a telephone, apparently observing for their artillery. Wigmore, on coming in, borrowed a rifle from the infantry, crept back, and shot three of the Germans.

unintended by the brigadier. Some of the 21st appear to have held that his suggestion should have been taken up, and, when later they went into action, their determination to prove that the 21st was not faint-hearted caused needless impetuosity.

The main attack was to be delivered by the 21st in two waves against Points 54, 77, 27, and 12 (shown in the marginal sketch). On the right the 24th would endeavour to secure, by means of bombing parties advancing behind the barrage, the dugouts of the farm and Point 31, while patrols pushed up all northward-leading trenches. On the left, as the British (II Corps) were not attacking, the flank of the 21st must be protected. Its

extreme flank was to seize part of a knot of German trenches known as "Point 54," at a cutting on the road from 81 towards Thiepval. From that point to the old line it would be guarded by a company of the 22nd, which was to follow closely upon the left of the 21st and drop its platoons successively to form flanking posts in the shell-holes. As General White, for the safety of this flank, urged the capture of certain points 300 yards more to the west, it was arranged that the last phase of the barrage should be thrown well forward,<sup>15</sup> so as to allow patrols to reach those positions after the objective originally set had been attained. Gellibrand chose to attack at dawn, his object being partly to achieve surprise, since all previous attacks by the Australians on this battlefield had been made at night or late in the afternoon. It would also be an advantage that the troops, after assembling



<sup>15</sup> See lower sketch on next page.



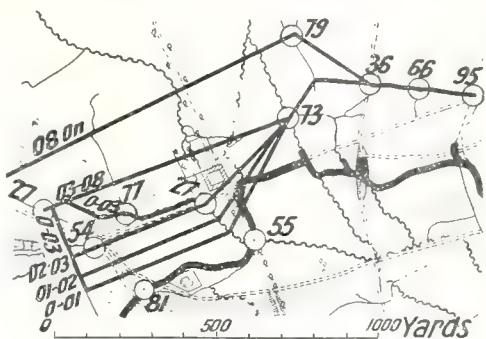
under cover of dark, would advance when there was just light enough for them to see the lie of the country without themselves being clearly seen. By careful observation during the dawn of August 25th, Gellibrand and Major Plant, his brigade-major, determined that the light was suitable about 4.30. In consultation with divisional headquarters, therefore, the attack was



*View from Skyline Trench near Point 81 towards the objectives of the 6th Brigade. The front before the battle is shown by a dotted line.*

fixed for 4.45 a.m. on August 26th. As a guide to the direction of the objectives, wires were run forward from both flanks of the 21st. Divisional orders were to watch the barrage "closely, and to keep as close as possible to it up to the objective."

The barrage, which for the first three minutes advanced in steps of about fifty yards a minute, was laid down by four brigades of artillery,<sup>16</sup> while seven batteries of heavy howitzers, which for some days had battered the objectives, fired heavily for five minutes on the Fabeck Graben.<sup>17</sup> The 21st, which half-an-hour before the starting time had climbed out of its front-line trench and lain down in proper order twenty-five yards ahead, now rose and followed the screen of bursting shells. This



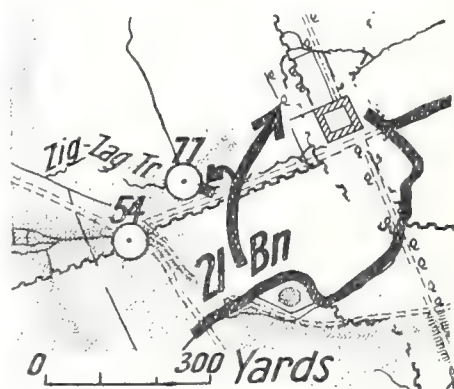
*18-pounder barrage, Aug. 26. Minutes after "zero" shown thus: 0-01; 01-02; and so forth. The infantry were to be previously withdrawn from any posts which would lie under the barrage.*

<sup>16</sup> The 5th A.F.A., and 5th, 11th, and 18th R.F.A. Brigades.

<sup>17</sup> Three extra siege batteries had been attached to the I Anzac Corps, whose heavy siege artillery now comprised the 45th Heavy Artillery Group (36th, 54th, 55th, 73rd, 94th, 108th, and 137th Siege Batteries) and 55th H.A.G. (four batteries of British 60-pounders). Of the siege batteries, the 73rd (South Africa), 108th, and 137th had 6-inch howitzers; the 36th and 54th (Aust.), 8-inch; and the 55th (Aust.), and 94th, 9.2-inch. These howitzers had flung nearly 700 shells daily on Aug. 23, 24, and 25. During the attack the heavy artillery of the II Corps assisted by firing on German batteries.

first lay almost overhead and then advanced by well-marked stages, the line of troops being, according to one account, "as close as twenty-five yards to it." Though the ground was rough with shell-holes, these were dimly visible, and the hurrying troops were just able to keep up with the line of shells. The whole area now resembled a sea of brown craters, in which the farm lay like a heap of half-submerged flotsam.<sup>18</sup> Close in front of the objectives lay the Courcelette road, but it was recognisable only by the low stumps of a few trees which had once shaded it. The advancing line passed it almost immediately, and with it the remains of the Konstanzer Graben (Constance Trench), from which a party of Germans fled as the troops approached. The objective trench, the Grosser Riegel ("Zigzag Trench"), lay just beyond, barely traceable; and, except on the left, the line, hurrying after the barrage, crossed it without any notion of halting there and swung unconsciously eastwards in the direction of flares which were rising from the farm or beyond. As the troops topped the shoulder on which lay the farm, a machine-gun somewhere to the left opened in enfilade, killing a number of men and causing the left centre to split and hesitate. The greater part, however, went on, disappearing from view.

The commander of the left company, Captain Sale,<sup>19</sup> himself wounded at this stage, felt certain that the objective lay on the near side of the shoulder, and that the advance was proceeding too far. He succeeded in stopping a few men and, after a chase, in bringing back some others; but orders could not be heard in the din, and it was a mere handful that he succeeded



<sup>18</sup> "Like a broken, water-logged fish-basket," says one account.

<sup>19</sup> Capt. F. Sale, M.C.; 21st Bn. Architectural draughtsman; of Melbourne; b. 14 June, 1892.



58. THE SOUTHERN CELLARS AT MOUQUET FARM

The main dugouts were below these.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E253.  
Taken on 28th February, 1917.*



59. ONE OF THE RUBBLE HEAPS AT MOUQUET FARM

A dugout entrance lay behind the heap.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E400.  
Taken on 27th November, 1916.*

*To face p. 812.*



60. THE RUINS OF MOUQUET FARM AS SEEN FROM POINT 55

The photograph (which looks northwards, east of Thiepval) was taken on 27th November, 1916, some weeks after the capture of the farm. The German dugouts at Point 48 lay beside the "road" near the tree. The officer in the darker uniform is Captain F. Sale, 21st Battalion.



in placing in two or three craters approximately in their proper position—Point 77 in the Zigzag Trench. The sound of machine-guns beyond the rise showed that the rest of the line had run into heavy fire somewhere near the back of the farm.

Another effort to correct the mistake was made, from quite a different direction, by an officer of the 24th from the east of the farm. On this flank two of the bombing parties of the 24th, advancing as the barrage lifted, reached their objectives: one, under Sergeant Pollington,<sup>20</sup> managed to throw a few bombs near the north-east corner of the farm, but suffered heavily from machine-gun fire and was driven back. The other, under Sergeant Robertson,<sup>21</sup> bombed the cellars at the south-east corner, and, having expended all its grenades, sought a further supply from Lieutenant Mahony,<sup>22</sup> who with a party of thirty was about to dig a trench along the southern fringe of the farm, joining the 21st and 24th. The Germans, however, now emerged from some opening in the ruins and quickly set up a machine-gun, which rendered both digging and bombing impossible. But it was within the scope of Mahony's orders to advance to help the 21st, and this he decided to do. Seeing one of its sergeants, he secured him as guide, and was directed into a German trench leading to the western side of the farm. Some of the 21st were bombing up it; but Mahony, catching sight of the main part of that battalion streaming away west of the farm far beyond their objective, ran after them and brought some back. The bombing



<sup>20</sup> Capt. G. D. Pollington, M.C., M.M.; 24th Bn. Grocer; of Dumosa, Vic.; b. Murtoa, Vic., 1891.

<sup>21</sup> Sgt. R. J. Robertson (No. 590; 24th Bn.). Clerk; of East Prahran, Vic.; b. Oxley Plains, Vic., 31 Aug., 1880. Killed in action, 26 Aug., 1916.

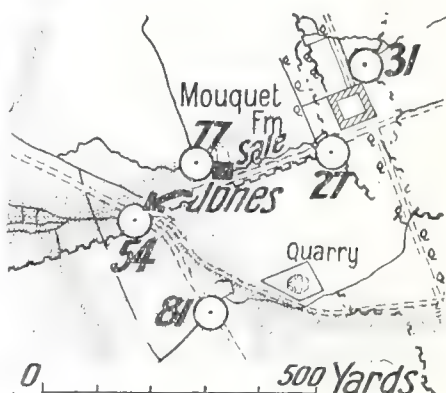
<sup>22</sup> Capt. J. A. Mahony, M.C.; 24th Bn. Civil servant; of Hansonville, Vic.; b. Northcote, Vic., 1894. Killed in action, 5 Oct., 1918.

in the trench had then ceased, the Germans in three dugouts having apparently been subdued. Mahony returned with this news to the commander of the 21st, Lieutenant-Colonel Forbes.<sup>23</sup>

To summarise. On the right, the bombing parties of the 24th had been repelled; in the centre, the main part of the 21st had followed the barrage far beyond the objective, but others had seized the trench west of the farm; on the left centre a small party held the objective near Point 77. It remains to tell of the progress of the left flank.

Most of the 21st's left company, which was to have seized a frontage from Point 54 to Point 77, had, like the centre, swung far to the right. Part of one platoon, however, under Lieutenant Jones<sup>24</sup>—in civil life a young Victorian policeman—had advanced in almost the true direction and reached and manned some craters near the Zigzag Trench.<sup>25</sup> Enemy fire was coming from only one point, 130 yards to the left. Jones at once recognised that this was Point 54, which his company should have captured. He called for the two special parties which were to barricade enemy trenches leading beyond the objective. Only one party was there. "Well," said Jones, "we'll go and take Point 54."

They reached it, still in the half-light, and found that its nearest face consisted of a trench parallel to and just short of the road-cutting, from which it was divided by a high wide bank on which



<sup>23</sup> Lieut.-Col. F. W. D. Forbes, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 21st Bn., 1916/17; 20th Bn., 1918/19. Bank manager; of Melbourne; b. Prahran, Vic., 24 Feb., 1883.

<sup>24</sup> Capt. O. A. Jones, 21st Bn. Police constable; of Melbourne; b. Broadford, Vic., 11 July, 1892. Died of wounds, 3 May, 1917.

<sup>25</sup> The men had been told that the objective was fifty yards beyond the tree-stumps, and, as they neared that point, rifles on shoulder, Jones heard them shouting "this is where we get to the line."

scrub had once grown. In this trench, separated by large traverses, were the entrances to a series of deep dugouts. Jones, as he lifted the waterproof sheet over the first entrance in order to throw in a bomb, could hear one of the Germans stumping up the steps from below, grumbling as he came. Another bomb had been rolled into the second dugout when Germans



*Point 54. The view is N.W. from the point at which the Australians entered.*

were seen approaching down the trench from the north-west. As bombs were very scarce, men were stationed to fire down the entrances, while Corporal Esposito<sup>26</sup> and Jones himself emptied their magazines into the oncoming Germans and drove them to shelter round a bend. But when one or two more dugouts had been reached and guarded, a din of fighting was heard close in rear. The enemy, who had hit several of the guards in the legs by firing up the stairways, had succeeded in swarming out of one dugout, and was firing into the party from behind. Others were coming over the top of the bank, others again round some corner to the south-east. After firing into the thick of them, Jones gave the word to leap out and hold the craters near the Zigzag Trench. The Germans followed them into the open, kneeling to fire and throwing bombs, but were driven back.<sup>27</sup>

The company of the 22nd whose duty was to form the flanking posts between 54 and the old line had duly formed two posts under Lieutenant Rodda;<sup>28</sup> but its two leading

<sup>26</sup> Lieut. B. F. Esposito, M.M.; 21st Bn. Carpenter; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Eaglehawk, Vic., 2 Dec., 1889.

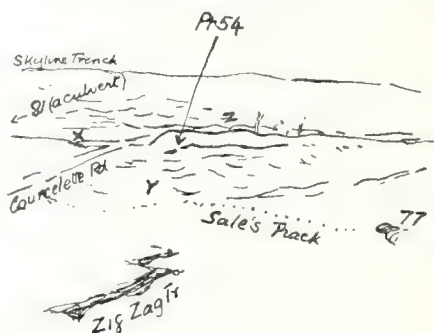
<sup>27</sup> Jones had with him in the thick of the fight at Point 54, besides Cpl. Esposito, Pte. W. A. Fahey (who fired with one arm till wounded in that also), Cpl. A. J. L. Hortin (who loaded for Fahey), Sgt. G. G. Moore (badly wounded), Pte. T. V. Copperwaite (killed), L/Cpl. J. V. Karran (shot through the lung), and Pte. C. B. Holt (who carried back a message). Lieut. A. L. Butterss was subsequently shot while trying to bring him reinforcements. (Fahey and Hortin belonged to Tallangatta, Vic.; Moore to Longerenong, Vic.; Copperwaite to Ballarat, Vic.; Karran to Melbourne, Vic., and Blundell Sands, Lancs., Eng.; Holt to Ivanhoe, Vic.; and Butterss to Brighton, Vic.).

<sup>28</sup> Capt. H. C. Rodda, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Accountant; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Hawthorn, 19 July, 1890.

platoons under Lieutenant Cumming,<sup>29</sup> understanding that their duty was to follow the left of the 21st, had disappeared far to the north-east. Some hours later the company commander, Captain H. E. Smith,<sup>30</sup> still searching for them in front of Point 54, was killed. A few of his men held out in shell-holes within bomb-range of 54, and one brave fellow was seen at the cross-road close beside that strong-point crossing bayonets, thrust for thrust, with a German, until another of the enemy fired from the flank and shot him dead.<sup>31</sup>

Point 54, therefore, remained uncaptured. Crowded along its parapet, the Germans with two machine-guns poured a stream of fire upon Australians visible to them

near Mouquet Farm. This attracted the attention of Captain Sale, holding the crater-post near Point 77. In crawling along Zigzag Trench, vainly searching for the other companies, he had found a Lewis-gun team with 1,500 rounds of ammunition. These gunners, reinforcing his post, now swept the parapet of Point 54 and shot down the German gun-crews, though other Germans eventually managed to remove both guns from the parapet. Both Sale and Jones, seeing that their posts had not been fully located by the enemy, kept most of their men hidden, waiting for the expected counter-attack.



*Points 54 and 77 viewed from near Mouquet Farm. The bayonet duel took place at "X." Men of the 22nd were seen at "Z." Jones was about "Y."*

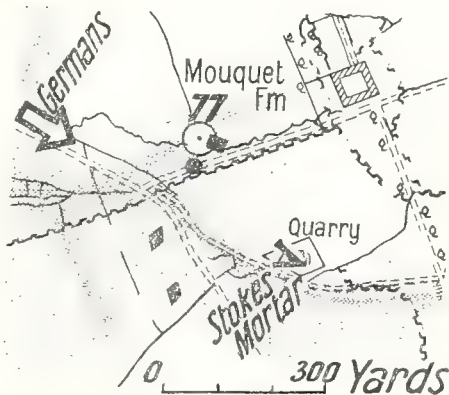
<sup>29</sup> Capt. N. D. L. Cumming, M.C.; 22nd Bn. School teacher; of Castlemaine and Burwood, Vic.; b. Murtoa, Vic., 9 Dec., 1892.

<sup>30</sup> Capt. H. E. Smith, 22nd Bn. Engineer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Inglewood, Vic., 30 May, 1891. Killed in action, 26 Aug., 1916.

<sup>31</sup> Lieut. Jones, who saw this incident from Zigzag Trench, was so spellbound watching parry and thrust that he failed to realise that he could have shot the German. When the Australian fell, the German, a big guardsman, turned him over with his foot. Jones fired, and the German collapsed, and was still lying there at nightfall.



At about 7.20 signs of this counter-attack appeared in the shape of a file of the enemy approaching along the Zigzag Trench from the direction of Thiepval. Sale sent information of this by three messengers; the first two were never again heard of; the third, and Sale himself, who followed, got through, to find that the movement had already been observed at The Quarry by Captain R. G. Smith of the 21st, who was watching from the edge of that place. Smith was immediately afterwards killed by a shell,<sup>32</sup> but Captain Maxfield,<sup>33</sup> who took his place, had a Stokes mortar directed on to the oncoming Germans. Its first bomb, which fell a few yards from the leading files, was followed by a rain of missiles<sup>34</sup> thrown for several minutes as fast as the gun could fire. The Germans ran back along the trench, and the threatening movement ceased.



News of Sale's post, as also of Jones's, soon reached the commander of the 21st. But after Mahony's return, no word came back of the main advance. In the trench through which Mahony had reached the forward troops,<sup>35</sup> German bombers had reappeared and barred communication. Sale, who succeeded in returning from The Quarry to his post in spite of machine-gun fire from the farm, sent a patrol to his right along Zigzag Trench; but, after passing only wounded

<sup>32</sup> Capt. R. G. Smith, 21st Bn. Coach builder; of Murtoa, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 28 Feb., 1883. Killed in action, 26 Aug., 1916. [He was a brother of Capt. H. E. Smith of the 22nd, whose death has just been related (p. 816). A third brother, W. L. Smith, a private in the 21st, died on July 31 of wounds received earlier in that day. They were sons of a police sergeant of Bendigo, Vic.]

<sup>33</sup> Capt. G. L. Maxfield, M.C.; 24th Bn. Accountant; of Euroa and Wonthaggi, Vic.; b. Longwood, Vic., 20 March, 1889. Killed in action, 3 May, 1917.

<sup>34</sup> About sixty in all.

<sup>35</sup> See pp. 813-4.

men, it was suddenly met and fired on by Germans. Later in the morning more firing and bombing were heard beyond the crest. German machine-gunners at Point 54 tried to join in, but were finally silenced by Sale's Lewis gunner. It was reported that the Germans were attacking from the farm and north of it. The isolated Victorians being evidently in a desperate position, the artillery barrage was called down north of the farm, and at 10.20 a.m. Gellibrand ordered the 24th to suppress the enemy in the farm by two bombing attacks from south and south-east. This perilous duty was accepted by Lieutenant Smythe,<sup>36</sup> and parties were organised; but, as the artillery could not be employed for fear of hitting the isolated troops, and the available trench-mortars were in positions from which the objective could not be hit, the order was at the last moment cancelled. A renewal of the attack on Point 54, ordered for noon after renewed bombardment by heavy artillery, also remained unattempted, apparently because the artillery had overshot their target. The abandonment of these projects was fortunate: it is unbelievable that such efforts, made in daylight against an alert enemy strongly occupying positions of great strength, had any chance of success. Early in the afternoon a somewhat similar attempt was made by the Germans, who had been massing east of the farm in the Fabeck Graben,<sup>37</sup> to bomb southwards against the advanced sapheads of the 24th. They were easily beaten back at these points by a Stokes mortar and Lewis guns, but they held the farm and Point 27<sup>38</sup> strongly, and, where the advanced body of the 21st had been fighting, there was now silence.

Four days later, when the 2nd Division had left the battlefield, there rejoined it two men of the 21st who had made their way back across three lines of German trenches to the

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<sup>36</sup> Major E. V. Smythe, M.C.; 24th Bn. Telephone mechanic; of Pennant Hills, N.S.W.; b. 13 May, 1891.

<sup>37</sup> In the morning several hundred Germans had been seen by the 23rd and 24th filing through the Fabeck Graben towards the farm. About fifty were believed to have been hit by the Australian rifles and Lewis guns, which also caused the explosion and burning of two cylinders believed to be *flammenwerfer*. In spite of this, the majority of the enemy had reached the edge of the farm, where they disappeared, presumably into dugouts.

<sup>38</sup> See marginal sketch on p. 814.

front held by the British south of Thiepval. The same day the stretcher-bearers of the 16th Battalion working in No-Man's Land—for both sides at Mouquet Farm allowed the bearers to go forward for about an hour almost every day under cover of a Red Cross or white flag—picked up five others near the Zigzag Trench.<sup>39</sup> The story of the advance, as told by these and by prisoners of war when they returned two years later, is shortly as follows:—

The main body of the 21st had advanced, searching for the second trench (*i.e.*, Zigzag Trench) and swinging towards the farm, until it reached a shattered trench beyond which were the stumps of the old orchard. Here the men on the left ran into their own barrage and became confused, while the rest halted. As orders were to occupy a covering line of shell-holes slightly beyond the objective, this was now done by direction of the senior officer, Captain Robertson.<sup>40</sup> Immediately afterwards Robertson was badly wounded by a bomb, and Lieutenant Clarebrough,<sup>41</sup> rallying the men to attack a German strong-post close ahead, was also killed. Lieutenant Cumming of the 22nd, seeing some of the men under their own barrage, ran along the line ordering them back into the trench. As Germans were then close to both flanks, and attacking on the right near the farm mounds, barricades were made at both ends and held by bombers and men with rifle-grenades. Captain Robertson and other wounded were placed in two deep dugouts.

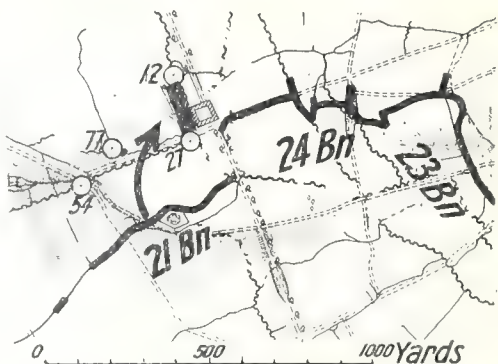
Though Robertson, dragging himself through it, was convinced that the trench now held was the objective, it

<sup>39</sup> The use of a white flag by stretcher-bearers was, of course, irregular; but, in the absence of red cross flags, handkerchiefs or any white rags were used, and this action was perfectly understood by both sides at the time. It was a case of humanity overstepping the strict rules of war. During the heat of action such rescues were seldom possible, but even then a red cross or white flag was sometimes respected. On Aug. 26, an Australian was seen coming from in front of the lines, covered with blood from head to foot, and apparently dazed, but holding up a white flag. The Germans at Point 54 did not fire, but whistled to him to come to their lines. He staggered on, however, into the Australian position. Other versions of this incident appear to have given rise to the report that the Germans directed Australian wounded back to the Australian lines.

<sup>40</sup> Capt. A. S. Robertson, 21st Bn. Architect and civil engineer; of Melbourne; b. Dundee, Scotland, 31 Aug., 1884.

<sup>41</sup> Lieut. C. A. W. Clarebrough, 21st Bn. Painter; of Albert Park, Vic.; b. Tauranga, N.Z., 25 Nov., 1879. Killed in action, 26 Aug., 1916.

was in reality that which is shown in the marginal sketch as facing almost due east and almost touching the farm on its right and the strong dugouts at Point 12<sup>42</sup> on its left. As a German machine-gun from somewhere in the ruin-heaps was making deadly play, Lieutenants Cumming and Black<sup>43</sup>—the only officers apparently then present—decided to attack it. The troops accordingly lined up and charged, but, though they penetrated all round the nearer rubble-heaps,<sup>44</sup> they could not get their bombs into the entrances. Lieutenant Black was shot through the lung from one of these, and the men had to fall back without achieving their object.



About 10.30 a.m. the constant bombing and fighting ceased, and the enemy became so quiet that an impending counter-attack was suspected. Germans were seen reinforcing the farm garrison from the north; the 21st sniped them constantly as they ran up an exposed bank, one "Bullocky" Johnson<sup>45</sup> accounting for a number until he was shot dead. Messengers could not be sent through to the old line, but a British airman, who came over circling low, saw and reported the isolated troops; yet no help came. Towards noon the German shell-fire increased, and the enemy from the farm counter-attacked the right. Part of that flank gave way, and jumped out into shell-holes behind the trench. The men from the left were called up to reinforce, but the enemy was far stronger. The Australians threw what bombs they had, and then Cumming, after consulting Captain Robertson—

<sup>42</sup> For a plan of these dugouts and those at the farm, see p. 844.

<sup>43</sup> Lieut. D. Black, 21st Bn. Farm labourer; of Scarsdale, Vic.; b. Scarsdale, Vic., 21 March, 1893. Killed in action, 4 Oct., 1917.

<sup>44</sup> These are well shown, looking from the north southwards, in Vol. XII, plate 237.

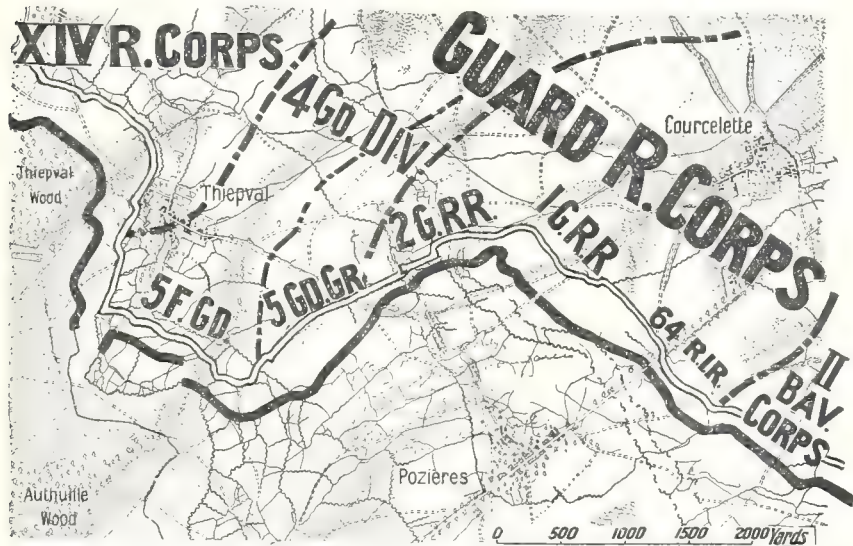
<sup>45</sup> Pte. C. Johnson (No. 403; 21st Bn.). Farm labourer; of Balranald, N.S.W.; b. Talbot, Vic., 1886. Killed in action, 26 Aug., 1916.



as he did throughout—gave the word to jump over the rear of the trench. There, in shell-holes twenty yards from the enemy, the remnants lay till dusk. Though constantly called upon to surrender, the Victorians—who included a number of up-country men—were determined to escape. For two days Cumming, though shot in the head, tried with two companions<sup>46</sup> to reach the Australian lines, but then ran into some Germans and was captured. A few men, as has been related, escaped. About sixty were captured at dusk on the 26th and a few others during the next day or two.

The 21st Battalion, which was relieved on the night of August 26th, lost 13 officers and 444 men; the brigade, out of a fighting strength of about 2,500, lost 896.

This attack had come up against a considerably strengthened enemy. Two corps (four divisions) had taken the place of the XIX (Saxon) Army Corps (three divisions). To relieve the exhausted 16th Division and part of the 24th, the Guard Reserve Corps, recently facing the French on the Amiens-St. Quentin road, had according to promise been hurried up by railway and motor-lorry, practically without rest, and on August 24 reached the front line. Its 4th Guard Reserve Division (5th Foot Guards, 5th Guard Grenadier Regiment, and 93rd R.I.R.) took over the line from Thiepval to Point 54, and the 1st Guard Reserve Division (1st and 2nd Guard Reserve Regiments and 64th R.I.R.) Mouquet Farm and that part of the 24th (Saxon) Division's line which faced the I Anzac Corps.<sup>47</sup> Opposite the III



<sup>46</sup> Privates W. Ross (of Merino, Vic.) and T. N. Found (of Drysdale, Vic.).

<sup>47</sup> Thus a German defending division exactly faced an Australian attacking division; but the latter of course had much greater reserves.

Corps the line was taken over by the II Bavarian Army Corps. The troops of the Guard Reserve Corps were undoubtedly very good; an Australian who spoke with a number of them captured on September 3 describes them as "a very fine stamp of men, by far the finest Germans I have ever seen; the only troops I have ever seen taller even than our own men." But "they didn't seem so hard as our boys—pink and white and some of them weedy."

In thus thickening their garrison, the Germans had especially strengthened their reserves at Mouquet Farm, both Guard divisions being warned that this was the crucial point for them, as it was even for the 26th (Württemberg) Division farther north. The commander of the 26th confessed to the chief-of-staff of the 4th Guard Division that he himself was generally in the trenches of his southern neighbour, since the fate of his own division might any day be decided there. The reply was that he need have no further anxiety for his left flank—the Württembergers might trust themselves in the hands of a division of the Prussian Guard!

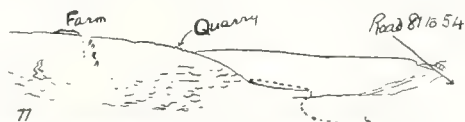
The 4th Guard Division had, however, from the moment of entry, been plunged into heavy fighting. No sooner had it taken over the front south of Thiépval, after suffering considerable loss in moving up to the trenches, than the 93rd R.I.R. had been attacked by the II British Corps and had lost a section of its trenches in the Leipzig Salient. The commander of the 1st Guard Reserve Division also expressed anxiety as to his power to hold Mouquet Farm without sufficient continuous artillery support. Communication was bad, pigeons and messenger dogs being often the only means of sending messages to the regimental headquarters at the Zöllern and Stauffen Redoubts. From those points, however, an excellent telephone system was soon established, enabling the artillery of the several adjoining sectors to be effectively employed. As an additional safeguard, the commander of the 1st Guard Reserve Division ordered his artillery to put down a standing barrage in front of the farm so as to render impossible the preparation of any attack.<sup>48</sup> The staff of the Guard Reserve Corps, which, like those of the divisions, had misgivings, urged upon the army commander that the best step was to counter-attack on a large scale, free the farm, and regain Pozières and the observation-posts on the windmill crest. But the army commander, while having no other objection, would allow the corps no additional troops for the purpose—not even a regiment to take over the westernmost sub-section of the 4th Guard Division. After a careful calculation of the available ammunition, he eventually approved of preparations for a counter-attack on a smaller front—from Point 54 to the Bapaume road. This decision had apparently been arrived at before the Australian attack upon the morning of August 26.

At the time of that attack there existed, between the flank of the 4th Guard Division at Point 54 and that of the 1st Guard Reserve Division immediately west of the farm, a gap covered only by "patrols." It was into this that the 21st Battalion broke. The fighting at Point 54, which was held by the 7th company of the 5th Guard Grenadiers, is described at some length in the history of that regiment. It is stated that the assault was eventually stopped at a barricade established by Vizefeldwebel (Sergeant-Major) Richter, from behind

<sup>48</sup> The Australians also at this time had a standing barrage day and night, though normally a very light one.

which a section of bombers overwhelmed the Australians when ten yards distant. Some machine-guns with Lieutenant von Borcke, the company commander, north of 54, became involved, and two other machine-guns with the 8th company farther north lent their support. It was probably the 8th which was driven off by the Stokes mortar,<sup>49</sup> for the 7th alone, "after bitter hand-to-hand fighting," repulsed the attack, Richter and von Borcke both being wounded, the latter mortally. The German staff evidently remained unaware of the capture of Point 77 by the Australians, for both German divisions believed that their line had by evening been entirely re-established.<sup>50</sup>

The front of the 21st Battalion, which had been gradually reinforced by the 22nd during the day, was taken over after dark by the incoming 14th (Victoria) Battalion of the 4th Brigade (4th Division), which relieved the 6th Brigade.<sup>51</sup> The proposal that the two divisions should act side by side had been abandoned on the advice of General Cox (4th Division), who pointed out that it would be difficult to find room in the back area for two divisional staffs. The 4th Brigade therefore came in under the staff of the 2nd Division. The outstanding tactical condition at this stage was that the line which was to have been straightened by the 2nd Division in preparation for the 4th Division's attack had not been straightened. But one new position of great advantage had been secured. When on the night of August 26th the 14th Battalion relieved the 21st, it was rumoured that some advanced post was still far out in front of The Quarry, though no one knew quite where. About 2 a.m., therefore, Captain Hansen<sup>52</sup> of the 14th sent Sergeant Stewart<sup>53</sup> with fifteen men to advance in skirmishing order in search of it. Passing the tree-stumps of the Courcelette road in pitch dark, they came upon it—then reduced to about ten men of the 21st under Sergeant McAlpine.<sup>54</sup>



*The Farm and Pt. 77 seen from Pt. 54. The dotted line shows the bottom of the valley.*

<sup>49</sup> The Germans thought that this fire heralded another Australian attack.

<sup>50</sup> It is mentioned in the history of the 5th Guard Grenadier Regiment that a machine-gun (probably that at The Quarry) next day "made itself very disagreeably felt" among the troops endeavouring to lengthen Schwaben Trench.

<sup>51</sup> It was at this time that the 15th Battalion (Queensland, Tasmania) relieved the 24th and 23rd, and held during Aug. 27 1,500 yards of front.

<sup>52</sup> Capt. S. M. Hansen, M.C.; 14th Bn. Architect; of Williamstown, Vic.; b. Williamstown, 1892. Died of wounds, 7 Feb., 1917.

<sup>53</sup> Sgt. J. S. Stewart, D.C.M. (No. 269; 14th Bn.). Pastoralist; of Hamilton district, Vic.; b. Branhholme, Vic., 23 May, 1890.

<sup>54</sup> Lieut. J. E. McAlpine, 21st Bn. Baker; of Merino, Vic.; b. Creswick, Vic., 6 July 1886. Died of wounds, 10 June, 1918.

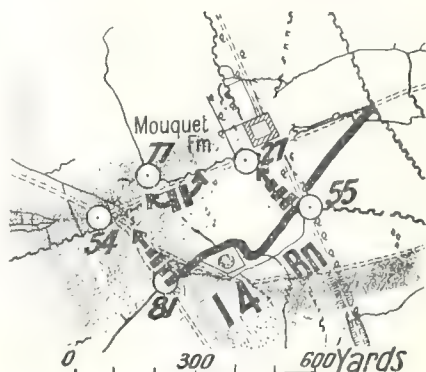


This was the post of the 21st at Point 77. Stewart and his men relieved the garrison, and a trench to the post was at once begun from The Quarry end.

It remained to straighten the front before the main attack. Accordingly, on August 27th the 2nd Division informed General Brand (4th Brigade), whose troops had taken over the northern line a few hours before:

Your first task will be the capture of Point 27 (near the south-west corner of the farm) and the enemy machine-guns in Mouquet Farm at a time to be selected by yourself. This evening is suggested.

Brand asked to be allowed to attack Point 54 at the same time, and permission was given. But it is difficult to justify the plan adopted. Gellibrand's brigade had failed because it had attacked a pocket between two very strong positions, both of which had remained uncaptured. A battalion and parts of two others had been employed. The plan now proposed was to be carried out by half of the battalion (the 14th) holding that part of the front. The two strong-points on the flanks were to be attacked by its bombers, who, when they had cleared the Germans out, were to burn red Bengal lights. Two platoons of riflemen following each party would then come forward and consolidate the respective posts. At the same time two other platoons, which would have gone forward to Point 77, would file or wheel outwards and occupy the line between 77 and the captured strong-points. The difficult Point 54 was to be bombarded by heavy artillery during the afternoon. The operation was arranged for midnight.



The bombing officer of the 14th, Lieutenant Dean,<sup>55</sup> who during the short respite in the back area had been keenly training his bombers, when called to battalion headquarters

<sup>55</sup> Lieut. A. R. Dean, M.C.; 14th Bn. Warehouseman; of Sydney; b. Herne Hill, Kent, Eng., 26 March, 1884. Died of wounds, 2 Dec., 1916.



and told of the enterprise, was enthusiastic and eager to put his keen training into practice. Upon one of his sergeants expressing a doubt, he laughed: "As soon as they see you, they'll run!"

Shortly before midnight he crept out with the right party of bombers towards Point 27, the left party, under one of his sergeants named Rule,<sup>56</sup> moving similarly in single file along the bank of the road from Point 81 towards Point 54. At midnight the attack was duly made. The subsequent report was:

1½ companies last night attacked Points 27 and 54 and gained the objective. Before the position could be consolidated the enemy counter-attacked in superior numbers, and Points 27 and 54 were evacuated. Our line therefore remains unchanged.

This hardly furnished an accurate notion of the operation; but a vivid account remains in the diary of Sergeant Rule. According to him, the preparatory bombardment of Point 54 by the "heavies" at 3 p.m., eagerly watched by his party, had been a failure:

3 p.m. came, and with it came one shell; a little while after, another one—and so on until about six came over. And not one blessed one hit the post. . . .

A medium trench-mortar, which was to take part, went wrong after firing two shots, and the bombardment was eventually effected by a Stokes mortar. The parties carrying bombs were evidently seen by the enemy, for The Quarry, to which they came, was bombarded with heavy shells at 4 p.m. It was then "swarming like a beehive," but, the men being perched on ledges around it, few were hit. This bombardment was renewed at dusk, and numbers of Germans were seen moving into Point 54. After dusk flares constantly rose from it, and Rule, who had been closely watching the place, informed Captain Hansen that in his opinion its capture by so small a force was an impossible task. "It has got to go on," was the answer.

I crouched into a corner . . . and must have slept for an hour when Hansen woke us all up and told us it was time to get the men ready. Once outside, to our surprise we found very few shells coming over. Lieutenant Dean got his men together very quickly, and moved off.

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<sup>56</sup> Capt. E. J. Rule, M.C., M.M.; 14th Bn. Orchardist; of Shepparton East, Vic.; b. Cobar, N.S.W., 26 Jan., 1886.

Rule's party—two sections, each under an N.C.O.—were hoisted out of the deep trench at Point 81 and formed up in due order, with two bayonet-men in front, bomb-thrower, carrier, and spare men following. One section was to attack the far, the other the near, end of Point 54. Nine men followed to attend to dugouts. At 11.50 p.m. Rule, who was leading, gave the word to creep forward beside the road-bank. The Germans apparently detected movement, for flares of all colours now rose, but the bank protected the men.

About half-way out we got into shell-holes to wait. Every time I looked I could see the long line of men following behind like a snake. . . . Two minutes more and the show would open. . . . As I was looking at my watch I heard a swish as a Stokes mortar shell came tumbling through the air. When it burst we crept forward again. The bursting shells were a good guide, and they were coming over very quickly—one in about every 4 or 5 seconds.

We crept up until we could feel the force of the explosion, and then lay down. It was a wonder some of us were not hit, but we knew it was our only salvation to get up close and rush in before the German could get his head up. Watching the minute hand until it showed 12, we got up as the last shell burst in the post and the rest (of the shells) went over on to the back of the post. Sergeant Myers<sup>57</sup> filed by with his men (the section for the far end of Point 54), and B section turned to their left and went up a place which looked as if it may have been a branch road. I went with this section, as its leaders were not quite as good.

We only got in about 30 yards when the Huns commenced to show themselves—far enough to have them on all sides of us. Somehow I'd got a little ahead, and between me and the rest a Hun officer got up. . . . Little Billy Mayne<sup>58</sup> saw him and put a bomb at his feet. This was as far as we got. Some Huns showed up in front, and we pelted bombs into them as hard as we could and they "got" for their lives. Again on our right they showed up, and they also ran before the bombs. This crowd ran right down into Myers' party, and he and his crowd were surrounded for a while. . . . I had only about four men left. The rest had vanished as they got their "issue" (*i.e.*, received their wounds).

As part of the strong-point, at any rate, had been cleared, Rule lit his red flare for the consolidating platoon, but it had halted some distance back and did not support him. The Germans at this stage swarmed back,

<sup>57</sup> Warrant-Officer J. J. Myers, M.M.; 14th Bn. Clerk; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Marong, Vic., 1896. Killed in action, 5 May, 1918.

<sup>58</sup> Pte. W. Mayne (No. 1826; 14th Bn.). Labourer; of South Yarra, Vic.; b. South Melbourne, Vic., 1897. Killed in action, 11 April, 1917.

pelting bombs at us. One almost hit my foot. . . . I remember staggering around for a while. It got so willing (*i.e.*, the fight became so keen) that we had to get out, and just as we reached the bottom of the bank, Sergt. Myers and the remnants of his party were then clearing for dear life too. My ears were ringing with the row of the bombs, but above it I could hear the Huns yelling "Ja Ja!" as they heaved their bombs.

After the party had run back out of bomb range, two red Bengal lights seen in the direction of Mouquet Farm showed that Lieutenant Dean also had reached his objective. Rule at once reported his own party's failure at Captain Hansen's headquarters.

Suddenly we heard Lieut. Dean's voice outside: "Here we are, here we are again"; and he staggered in, his face covered with blood. A bullet had lifted the top of his skull, and he died some time after. He refused attendance until others were dressed . . . one of the finest officers I had anything to do with.

Poor Dean's effort was just the same as ours—they got in and had to fly for their lives. . . . All the same, if we suffered, the Hun suffered as much. Next morning four Hun stretcher-bearers stood up waist-high with red-cross flags, and we watched the procession (of men carrying the wounded) go out, none of our lads firing on them.

The Germans following up the retirement appear to have approached Point 77, but it held out. One prisoner, the orderly of a German company commander, was taken, and his statements confirmed the belief as to the strength of the Mouquet Farm dugouts. The loss of the 14th Battalion amounted to seventy-five, nearly all these being wounded.

The German records of this night relate chiefly to an attack made at dusk farther west, where the II British Corps was gradually reducing the re-entrant. It was believed by the German staff that the front of the British assault extended as far as the east of Mouquet Farm, and that its first wave was broken by the German barrage. A mention of bitter bayonet and revolver fighting in the sector of the 5th company, 5th Guard Grenadiers, may refer to the 14th Battalion's operation. Next day the 93rd R.I.R. in the Leipzig Salient was again attacked by the II Corps, and had to be relieved on August 29 by the 5th Foot Guards.

The relief of part of the 24th (Saxon) Division by Bavarians became known to the I Anzac Corps on this day. Being wrongly informed that the II Bavarian Corps was being brought in on a narrow front astride of the Bapaume road, General White anticipated that the counter-stroke which

he had always expected from that direction was now imminent. The 7th Brigade, which had just taken over that front, the 5th (which had just left it), and the protecting artillery were warned; but no attack came. The enemy, as has been seen,<sup>59</sup> was indeed contemplating an important counter-offensive; but his plans had not yet been perfected when a renewed thrust by the Australians intervened.

The 14th Battalion having failed to straighten the front, General Brand next day proposed to its commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Dare, that the battalion should that night seize Mouquet Farm. Captain Hansen, the local commander at The Quarry, insisted, however, that the task was impossible. After conference with General Cox of the 4th Division, who took control of the front at noon on the 28th, it was decided that the task should be left over. The 16th (Western Australia) and 13th (New South Wales) Battalions would that night relieve the 14th and 15th respectively, and would undertake their important enterprise—the last but one for which Australian troops would be available—without previous straightening of the line.

General White was now of opinion that the forces employed against the farm were too light. Prisoners had spoken of its dugouts as sheltering several platoons and the headquarters of two companies, and the recent fighting had proved the strength of the surrounding positions. In each of the five assaults already made, sections of the attacking force had entered the enemy's trenches; but there were always Germans between, holding the heads of the communication trenches and quickly reinforced from strong neighbouring positions such as the farm or the Zollern Redoubt. White had therefore advised General Birdwood that the whole 4th Brigade should be employed. But General Cox urged that he could spare only two battalions, with half of a third as reserve. Possibly through the previous success of the 4th Division, he and others concerned were full of optimism as to the sufficiency of this force. Orders were therefore given that the 13th and 16th should attack on August 29th the

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<sup>59</sup> P. 822.

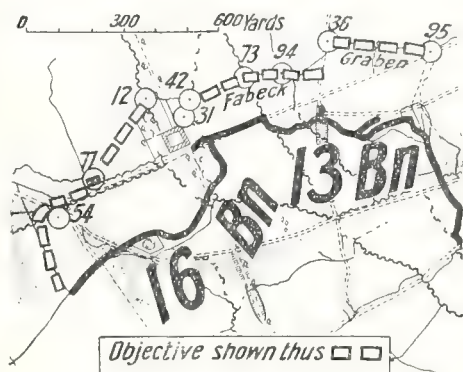


objectives shown in the marginal sketch. To allow each to concentrate its four companies on the northern front, part of the 12th Brigade<sup>60</sup> was brought in to hold the eastern face of the salient. The 7th (2nd Division) still held under the 4th Division the front east of Pozières.

The artillery preparation included "special" practice barrages and bombardments by the Anzac "heavies"; on August 28th and 29th over 2,600 medium and heavy shells were thrown, chiefly upon the enemy's lines around the farm. Unfortunately the fine weather had broken. Rain fell through most of the night of the 28th, and at 4 p.m. on the 29th dark thunderclouds drove overhead and the rain descended in sheets. A British balloon was blown away, and the continuous rumble of French heavy artillery, preparing for the important offensive arranged for the end of August, ceased. The offensive had been postponed by General Foch to September 3rd, as was that of the British near Guillemont. That night an Australian diarist (in bivouac near Sausage Valley) notes:

The sky was still dripping and showery. I thought our attack might be countermanded, but at 11 o'clock we heard the guns behind us open.

That was the hour for the attack. In spite of the rain that turned every shell-hole into a slimy pool, and the mud that coated rifles, bombs, tunics, and faces and sucked at the boot-soles at every step, the two battalions were in their starting positions when the bombardment fell. The 13th at once headed up the crest for the Fabeck Graben and the new German trench in front of it (known to the enemy as "Kollmann Graben"), while the 16th made for the trenches on either side of it. The 13th had during the day been

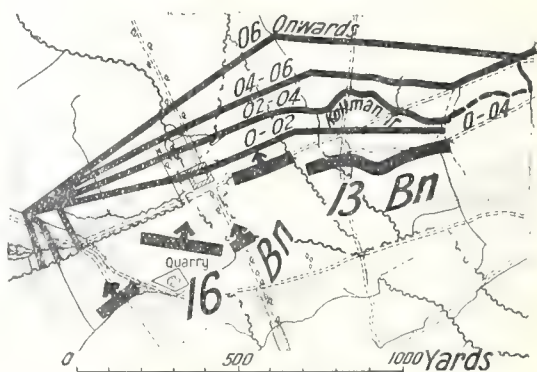


<sup>60</sup> The 45th and 46th Battalions.

severely shelled by its own heavy artillery, which from 1 to 2 p.m. had bombarded Kollmann Trench only fifty yards from some of its sap-heads. An order had indeed been given that the infantry must previously withdraw somewhat; but, as too often happened, the order reached battalion headquarters too late for action—at 1.20 p.m. The enemy also had shelled heavily during the day, and the 13th lost ninety men through these combined causes before the attack began.<sup>61</sup> "The men have had a shake-up," Lieutenant-Colonel Durrant reported.

Nevertheless the greater part of the British shelling had been excellently directed. Moreover, the ground was well known to officers and men, and aeroplane-photographs of the objectives had reached the company commanders before the fight. These officers were allowed to choose the formation they desired, and, their companies not being strong, those on the right decided

to go over in two waves, those on the left in one. But the mud rendered it difficult to keep up with the barrage, which advanced about fifty yards a minute. Kollmann Trench, almost unoccupied and broken down by shelling and rain, was easily taken;



*18-pounder Barrage, Aug. 29.*

but before the thin line reached the Fabeck Graben one of the enemy posts there was on its defence. At this stage Captain Pulling's company on the right was broken by rifle and machine-gun fire from the direction of Courcellette and the right front; the two next companies suffered from the same fire, both their commanders, Captains Browning<sup>62</sup> and Wells,<sup>63</sup> being wounded, the former severely, although he

<sup>61</sup> One account especially notes the cool manner in which Capt. R. H. Browning walked among his men during this shelling.

<sup>62</sup> Lieut.-Col. R. H. Browning, M.C.; Aust. Flying Corps. Solicitor; of Bathurst, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 15 Nov., 1886.

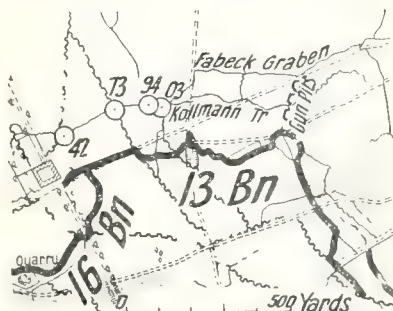
<sup>63</sup> Major T. Wells, M.C.; 13th Bn. Draughtsman; of Kogarah, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 28 Nov., 1892.

continued to direct his men. A party under Lieutenant Morgan<sup>64</sup> pushed on to Fabeck Graben, and another with Sergeant Turnbull<sup>65</sup> to the line of old gun-positions held by enemy infantry on the extreme right. But no rifles or Lewis guns could be fired, all being choked with mud; even bombs were often so coated that the pins could not be pulled. The troops were too few and too disorganised to hold even Kollmann Trench under these conditions, and the survivors struggled back to the front line from which they had attacked.

A German account states that the Fabeck Graben was attacked at 12.15<sup>66</sup> (*i.e.*, a good deal later than the first advance), but the attack broke down for the most part in the thin wire-entanglements protecting the trench; small parties which penetrated the line were killed in hand-to-hand fighting.

Only the left company of the 13th, under Captain Harry Murray, advancing beside the O.G. Lines almost precisely as it had done a fortnight before,<sup>67</sup> succeeded in capturing its objective. This company

started only 64 strong, having lost 38 men during the day;<sup>68</sup> but, while the regimental bombers under Lieutenant Henderson and Lance-Corporal James<sup>69</sup> attacked the German posts in the O.G. Lines, Murray's men seized Fabeck Trench east of Point 73. A German machine-gunner at



Point 94, who fired to the last moment, was shot with a revolver at three yards' distance as he tried to save his gun. Several others had been seen near Point 42 fleeing with their guns, and could easily have been shot had any Australian rifles been fit to fire. As it was, bombs were the only means of offence. Murray had now only thirty men, but behind

<sup>64</sup> Lieut. T. H. Morgan, 13th Bn. Farmer; of Narromine, N.S.W.; b. Chaldon, Surrey, Eng., 28 May, 1888. Killed in action, 11 April, 1917.

<sup>65</sup> Capt. A. D. Turnbull, M.C., M.M.; 13th Bn. Labourer; of Newcastle district, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 1891.

<sup>66</sup> The German reports naturally contain great discrepancies in recording the times at which their opponents attacked.

<sup>67</sup> See p. 766.

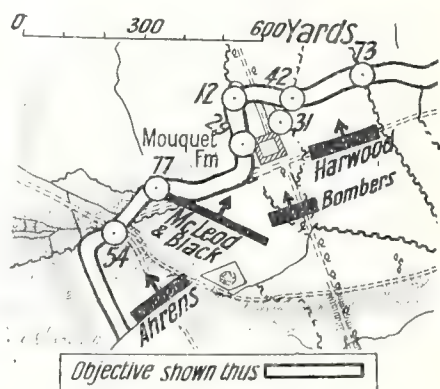
<sup>68</sup> One shell annihilated a section just before the start.

<sup>69</sup> Lieut. C. W. James, M.M.; 13th Bn. Labourer; of Albury, N.S.W.; b. Newtown, N.S.W., 3 Oct., 1895.

his left flank bombing could be heard, where Henderson, who at first met strong opposition, had cleverly forced his way forward under cover of a barrage supplied by a Stokes mortar.<sup>70</sup> Murray made a junction with him, and O.G.I., together with 150 yards of the Fabeck Graben to the east of it, was thus temporarily occupied.

The assault by the 16th had met with about the same measure of success. This battalion also attacked with four companies in line, and in a single wave. But the arrangements for launching it were complicated by the fact that the Germans still held a position beside the road south of the farm, thus dividing the attacking troops in two. West of the road the attackers lay down along a line of broad white tape placed after dark by Lieutenant Lynas,<sup>71</sup> the intelligence officer, and his scouts.

East of it they attacked from the front line. The left, under Captain Ahrens,<sup>72</sup> was to seize Point 54 and occupy a line from there towards the farm. The two centre companies, under Captain McLeod<sup>73</sup> and Major Black, were to take the trenches immediately beyond the farm;



the right, under Captain Harwood, was to seize the Fabeck Graben east of the farm and join the 13th Battalion at Point 73. If the attempt on Point 54 failed, the left company was to reinforce the left centre. This contingency occurred. While lying out, three minutes before launching this attack, the men of Ahrens' company appear to have been

<sup>70</sup> The mortar advanced its shells fifteen yards every three shots, the bombers following the bursts. Another mortar under Lieut. J. K. Robin (of Kensington, S. Aust.) of the 16th had barraged Murray's objective.

<sup>71</sup> Capt. W. J. D. Lynas, D.S.O., M.C.; 16th Bn. Prospector; of Marble Bar, W. Aust.; b. Auckland, N.Z., 20 Dec., 1886.

<sup>72</sup> Capt. C. Ahrens, D.S.O., M.C.; 16th Bn. Sleeper hewer; of Manjimup, W. Aust.; b. Corryong, Vic., 4 Nov., 1888.

<sup>73</sup> Capt. A. McLeod, 16th Bn. Bank clerk; of Katanning, W. Aust.; b. Katanning, 14 Jan., 1891. Accidentally killed, 5 Dec., 1916.



detected, for the enemy sent up coloured flares and laid his barrage on No-Man's Land. The company is said to have lost forty-five men in attempting to reach Point 54; its commander and some of his men did reach the enemy defences at the cross-roads. Their opponents, who seem to have retired to the left, then counter-attacked with bombs and threatened to get behind them. On their being thus driven back, Major Margolin at The Quarry ordered them, as arranged, to assist the left centre. By then, however, the fate of that attack also had been decided.

Captain McLeod, commanding the left centre company, was wounded early in the advance, and his juniors, Lieutenants Johnson<sup>74</sup> and Hutton,<sup>75</sup> were both killed. Their company was to seize Point 12; but inasmuch as the 21st, attacking over the same ground in the morning light, had utterly lost its way, it is not strange that the 16th missed direction in the dark. McLeod's company appears to have thrust deep into the pocket west of the farm,<sup>76</sup> where there were no enemy trenches.

The next company, Major Black's, was to capture the farm. Its men, Black leading, went right through the rubbish-heaps. A German machine-gun was already in position as Black reached the mounds at the farthest corner. But the gunner was sheltering, though his hands were on the buttons, and, when he raised his head, Black shot him and put two bullets into the gun. Black was immediately stunned by a bomb, but the position was seized by Sergeant Bradley<sup>77</sup> of Harwood's company, which entered this end of the Fabeck Graben simultaneously with the rise of the barrage. Some way to their right, at 73, a German post was firing on the 13th; but on Harwood's front the enemy was caught too soon. Lieutenant Hough<sup>78</sup> seized Point 42, Corporal Bradley Point 31, and both of them bombed up the converging trenches towards Point 12, in front of which they met. This

<sup>74</sup> Lieut. J. E. Johnson, 16th Bn. Clerk; of Largs Bay, S. Aust.; b. Knightsbridge, S. Aust., 22 April, 1894. Killed in action, 30 Aug., 1916.

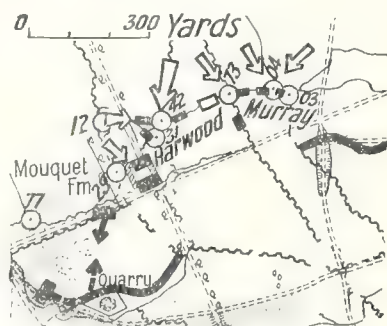
<sup>75</sup> Lieut. J. Hutton, 16th Bn. Brickmaker; of Brookton, W. Aust.; b. Paisley, Scotland, 1882. Killed in action, 30 Aug., 1916.

<sup>76</sup> The remains of men wearing the colours of the 16th were found there long afterwards.

<sup>77</sup> Lieut. H. J. Bradley, M.C., D.C.M.; 16th Bn. Labourer; of Geraldton, W. Aust.; b. Cooma, N.S.W., 1886.

<sup>78</sup> Lieut. G. Hough, 16th Bn. School teacher; of Collie, W. Aust.; b. Bolton, Lancs., Eng., 1891. Killed in action, 6 Dec., 1916.

company had managed to preserve two Lewis guns and about five rifles in firing condition, and both beyond and in the farm fighting was very fierce. The Germans were numerous, in front line, shell-holes, dugouts, and communication trenches. The Western Australians bombed them from the parapet or down the dugout stairs. The task of clearing these underground works had been allotted to the bombers under Lieutenant Wilton, who, for the purpose of wrecking dugout entrances, had brought Stokes-mortar bombs adapted for use as hand-grenades. How many of these were employed is doubtful, but German accounts state that all of the entrances but one were wrecked. They were, however, difficult to discover amid the rubbish-heaps, and, as the Australians threw bombs into one, the enemy would bolt from another. The Germans here resisted toughly, jumping back from shell-holes into the trenches from which they had been bombed and even flinging bombs up the dugout stairs so as to wound men at the top. All officers of Black's company were hit, but about fifty prisoners were "rounded up" and a report sent back that the farm had been taken. Unfortunately the attacking line was very weak—"thin as tissue paper," Captain Harwood told General Glasgow the next day. The trenches captured were not continuously occupied; the troops did not swarm over them as in the capture of Pozières or Pozières Heights. Strong nests of Germans remained throughout in the dugouts at Point 12, which were uncaptured, and in the lines leading to the Zollern Redoubt. The two centre companies of the 16th were driven back before the left company from The Quarry could reinforce them. Germans from the north broke into Harwood's line at Point 42, isolating the platoon east of it. Others, flowing out of Point 12 and pockets in the farm, suddenly opened with a machine-gun from the northern end of the farm, just as the prisoners



*German Counter-attacks indicated by the white arrows.*

were being despatched to the rear. The prisoners were lost. Harwood, almost surrounded, sent to the isolated platoon east of 42 an order to withdraw. The sister companies had long since fallen back, and Harwood and his men had been given up for lost, when at 1.30 a.m. they appeared, dragging themselves through the mud. Their two Lewis guns, immediately set up in the old line, prevented the Germans from following.

Meanwhile Captain Murray of the 13th had been holding his 150 yards of trench with seven posts of three men each and a party of five bombers, who had a "roving commission" to reinforce wherever the enemy counter-attacked. The Germans twice attacked from the trench junctions on his right, each time with a dense shower of bombs, but the 13th on this occasion had brought plenty of grenades,<sup>79</sup> and the attacks were driven off. Murray then himself took two bombers and thrust along the Fabeck Graben to the west, seeking touch with the 16th, but met only Germans, who were driven off, after all the patrol had been wounded.<sup>80</sup>

Murray had at this stage only one unwounded officer.<sup>81</sup> The Germans now attacked at Point 94 and were for the third time repulsed; but, being out of touch and learning that the 16th had been seen to fall back, Murray ordered his men to clear the wounded and then withdraw. For the second time Point 73, after capture by the 13th Battalion, had to be relinquished to the enemy. The two battalions were next day relieved, having lost in two days—the 16th, 9 officers and 219 others; the 13th, 10 officers and 221 others.<sup>82</sup>

With daylight, the stretcher-bearers of both sides came out under large red-cross flags to search the dreadful mud, the Australians being protected by white arm-bands or by improvised flags, more or less white. In front of the 13th Battalion the stretcher-bearers of the two sides divided

<sup>79</sup> Lieut. Henderson's bombers had a large supply.

<sup>80</sup> In an unofficial account of this patrol, Murray said: "Two bombers and one officer were sent to left. . . . They got about 80 yards along and were attacked by a German bombing party. The Germans threw two bombs—the first we knew of them—blew one man's foot off and hit the second in the eye. The officer sprang ahead and jumped straight on top of a German patrol who were lying on the ground. They jumped up and attacked him with knobkerries. One hit him on the steel helmet and another hit at his revolver. . . . He shot both. The three others cleared. He threw a Mills bomb at them and, with the man whose eye was wounded, helped the third man back. . . ." (He omitted to state that the officer was himself.)

<sup>81</sup> Lieut. G. Marper (of Sydney). Lieut. B. S. N. Pattrick, who as a lance-corporal had captured the eleven prisoners and machine-gun in the attack of Aug. 14 (*see p. 766*), had been killed on Murray's right flank.

<sup>82</sup> In addition to those already mentioned the following officers were killed: Lieut. J. Allen (of Sydney), 13th Bn.; Lieut. L. A. Stephenson (of Perth), 16th Bn.



No-Man's Land between them, each handing over any of the other's wounded whom they found. On this day the parties for carrying out the German wounded were so large that some Australians were convinced that they were fatigue parties<sup>83</sup> taking this opportunity for safe passage to and from the front. At Corps Headquarters it was held advisable that such proceedings should be stopped. The chief medical officers of the 2nd and 4th Divisions, however, had both expressed the opinion that, if this were done, the one chance of recovering the wounded would be forgone, and General Cox made representations to that effect. The matter was referred to army headquarters, which ruled that the size of stretcher-parties must be limited. It is interesting to note that on September 8th, the German Guard Reserve Corps, actuated by like suspicion of its opponents, issued even stronger orders.<sup>84</sup> The available evidence does not show whether these decisions were put into force by either side; before the British order could be put into effect, the I Anzac Corps had left the Somme.

It is probable that individual Germans were sometimes misusing the Red Cross flag. On this occasion, unfortunately, the Germans also might have had grounds for objecting to the proceedings. In the 16th Battalion, whose bearers worked on Zigzag Trench and almost to the farm, bringing in numbers of wounded, an officer thought fit to take advantage of the opportunity to reconnoitre the farm. The German suspicions may have been aroused, for a Prussian officer in spotless uniform stepped out of the ruins and came to the party. Pointing to his watch, which then showed 9.50 a.m.,<sup>85</sup> he said: "Ten minutes—shoot!", and the day's truce came shortly to an end. The question of right and

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<sup>83</sup> They, of course, carried no weapons.

<sup>84</sup> "The English are misusing the Red Cross flag. Patrols, reliefs, etc., carry the flag. They wish to stop our fire. Anyone who acquiesces in this injures our cause. Any kind of direct agreement with the enemy is wrong. If he wishes to open negotiations, he must send an officer with a flag of truce in the prescribed manner." The British decision, on the other hand, was that a stretcher-bearer should deliver to the enemy a message to the effect that no single stretcher-bearing party should comprise more than three stretchers with the necessary bearers. Front-line officers realised that it was not easy to enforce such orders—any total prohibition of this humane procedure would probably be ignored by their men. For this reason a week earlier General Holmes, being informed by the headquarters of the 2nd Division that the proceedings under the Red Cross must cease, had left the enforcement of this instruction to the discretion of the officers on the spot. Prior to Sept. 8 a similar course may have been adopted by the Germans, for German prisoners said they had orders not to fire on Australian bearers provided their own were not fired on.

<sup>85</sup> By British watches, the time was 8.50.



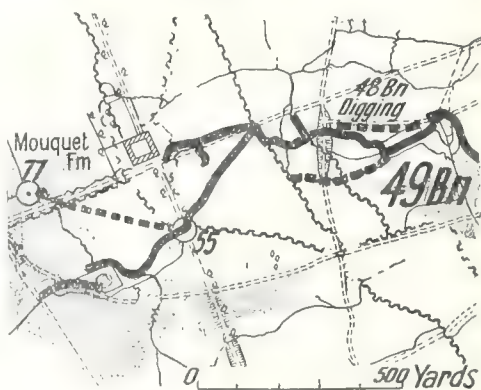
wrong in this case is complicated by the fact that constant transgression by the Germans early in the war had caused the ordinary rules to lose much of their sanctity. Nevertheless the profession of the British that they did not do these things was sincere, and, with rare exceptions, was honorably practised. Quite apart, therefore, from the question of honour—which the enemy's action had compromised—the definite discovery of an individual case such as this would have furnished the enemy with propaganda more deadly to the true cause of the Allies than a first-rate defeat, and would have robbed the wounded of both sides at Mouquet Farm of their one hope of safety.

This attack had fallen upon the left of the 5th Guard Grenadier Regiment (4th Guard Division) holding Point 54, and almost the whole of the 2nd Guard Reserve Regiment (1st Guard Reserve Division) holding from Mouquet Farm to near The Elbow. The attack on Point 54, according to German accounts, was renewed ten minutes later and again failed. But the 1st Guard Reserve Division reported that the assault on the farm, delivered after only brief bombardment, was the heaviest yet experienced, and that at the first shock the Australians had overrun the farm and forced their way into the main fire-trenches. The regiment responsible for the sector, however, supported by the II/1st Guard Grenadier Regiment, retook the farm. A few prisoners were captured, but most of the Australians here, it was said, were killed. The fighting in the farm was described as very difficult, the entrances of all the dugouts except one being stopped. Moreover, the Australians occupied trenches right up to the farm, and not only held them in the face of counter-attack, but pushed out saps north and south. The possession of the farm with its good dugouts was, however, too important for the Germans to think of abandoning it.

There is some evidence that it was only on this night that the German staff discovered the penetration of its line at Point 77. The local reserves of the 5th Guard Grenadiers were apparently ordered to close the gap, but did not succeed. It was assumed that the fighting was preliminary to a still heavier attack, to meet which special measures were adopted by the 4th Guard Division. When no such thrust followed, it was conjectured that the plans had been dislocated by rain. The wet weather gave the Germans some relief from constant assaults and bombardment; the 4th Guard Division seized this opportunity for improving its trenches with duckboards, and for the first time was able to supply all its infantry with a warm meal.

Although the rain had been in part responsible for the failure of this—the sixth—attack at the farm, it was recognised that a second factor had been the weakness of the

attacking force. It was decided that in the next—and final—attempt by the I Anzac Corps, which would form part of Gough's long-anticipated assault on three sides of Thiepval, this mistake should not be repeated. As the troops on the immediate left of the Australians would not be attacking, Point 54 was not to be taken, but merely screened off with smoke. The Australian attack was thus limited to 1,250 yards of front from Point 77 to the north-eastern angle of the salient. On this front assembly-trenches for three strong battalions—the 51st, 52nd, and 49th—would be dug; and, in order to keep those battalions fresh for the fighting, this preparatory work and that on the communications would be undertaken almost entirely by other troops. Only the 4th Division and corps headquarters were now remaining on the front, the 2nd Division being on its way towards Ypres, and the 1st already there. The withdrawal of the last troops of the 2nd Division was permitted by the arrival of the 1st Canadian Brigade, which, under control of the 4th Australian Division, relieved the 7th Brigade in the line east of Pozières on August 30th. The 12th Australian Brigade relieved the 4th, though two of the battalions of the latter (the 14th and 15th) continued to furnish digging and carrying parties. To allow the whole 12th Brigade to work on the northern trenches, the 1st Canadian Brigade extended its flank to the north-east. The other working parties were provided by the 4th Division's engineers and pioneers, and by two British cavalry regiments—Life Guards and Leicestershire Yeomanry.<sup>86</sup> An endeavour was thus made to provide the following works:—east of the farm, three lines of assembly trenches; south-west of it, a single



*New Assembly Trenches shown  
thus ■■■■■■*

<sup>86</sup> Detachments of 50 or 100 from each of these were sent up daily by order of Reserve Army.

"jumping-off" trench from Point 55 to Point 77; and separate approaches for each of the three attacking battalions. But although on August 31st glorious weather returned, filling the sky with aircraft<sup>87</sup> busy with preparation for the coming offensive, the work of the digging parties went slowly, many of them taking most of the night in getting through the congested communication trenches to their work.<sup>88</sup> On the night of September 1st, when the front line was taken over by advanced companies of the battalions which were to attack, parts of these works—especially the "jumping-off" trench south-west of the farm<sup>89</sup>—were far from complete. Birdwood was deeply anxious, but the troops responded to appeal,<sup>90</sup> and by the morning of September 2nd, with the exception of the trench south-west of the farm, the task was finished. Part of the 47th Battalion was left to continue until midnight the work on the unfinished sector. The rest of the 12th Brigade was relieved by the main body of the 13th, which, towards evening on the 2nd, marched from its bivouacs west and east of Albert.

The 13th Brigade, though daughter of the old 3rd, was probably the least experienced group in the I Anzac Corps. Only two of its battalions—the 50th (South Australia) and 51st (Western Australia)—had been heavily engaged in the first tour. Though the brigadier, T. W. Glasgow, like his staff-captain, R. Morell,<sup>91</sup> was a civilian (a Queensland grazier),<sup>92</sup> he was the most forcible of the three strong brigadiers of the 4th Division. With keen blue eyes looking

<sup>87</sup> There were observed at one time in the air 32 captive balloons of the Allies, 9 of the Germans, and 29 British or French aeroplanes.

<sup>88</sup> The difficulty of locating the front lines, when reached, is illustrated by the case of fourteen stretcher-bearers of the 13th Field Ambulance, who, with five of the 48th Battalion, went up to the firing line about dusk on Aug. 31. Failing to discover their own front line in the crater-field, they went on and found themselves in the German lines, where they were made prisoners. The 13th Field Ambulance lost 35 bearers during this tour.

<sup>89</sup> That is, from Point 55 to Point 77, being dug by the 47th Battalion.

<sup>90</sup> Cox's chief-of-staff, Lieut.-Col. D. J. C. K. Bernard (of Castle Hacket, Tuam, Ireland) urged on some of the battalion commanders that the work must be regarded as a battle operation. This appeal seldom failed. It is recorded that the 15th Battalion worked upon the support trenches in the north-eastern corner until the men fell down unconscious as they dug; and that, when they came back from the trenches and lined up for their tot of rum, only one man received it. The rest had dropped, and slept where they fell.

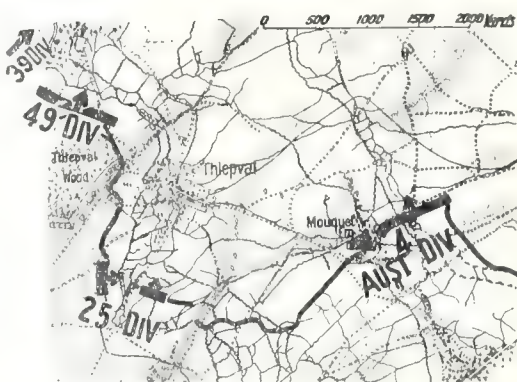
<sup>91</sup> Major R. Morell, D.S.O., O.B.E. G.S.O. (2), 1st Aust. Div., 1918/19. Grazier; of Richmond district, North Queensland; b. Wollongong, N.S.W., 28 May, 1889.

<sup>92</sup> The brigade-major, Major J. C. T. E. C. Ridley (of Gympie, Q'land), was a regular.

from under puckered humorous brows as shaggy as a deer-hound's; with the bushman's difficulty of verbal expression but sure sense of character and situations; with a fiery temper, but cool understanding and a firm control of men; with an entire absence of vanity, but translucent honesty and a standard of rectitude which gave confidence both to superiors and subordinates, he could—by a frown, a shrewd shake of the head, or a twinkle in eyes screwed up as if against the glare of the plains—awaken in others more energy than would have been evoked by any amount of exhortation.

The attacking battalions, from left to right, would be the 51st (Western Australia), 52nd (Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia), and 49th (Queensland). The 50th (South Australia), which had suffered most severely in the first tour, would form the reserve. The incoming companies of the other three reached their assembly positions about 11 p.m., their routes and frontages having been carefully reconnoitred beforehand by officers<sup>93</sup> and scouts, who now with excellent precision led the troops to their stations. The "jumping-off" trench south-west of the farm was by then deep enough to serve as a clear assembly-line, along which the 51st lay down in shell-holes. A party of the 50th<sup>94</sup> under Lieutenant Cheney<sup>95</sup> held Point 77.

The hour for the Reserve Army's attack was 5.10 a.m.—just after dawn. At that hour the Reserve Army threw in all the force that, under Haig's



<sup>93</sup> Including Major Dickinson, 4th Div. staff, the battalion intelligence officers (in the 51st, Lieut. Louch; in the 52nd, Lieut. A. M. Maxwell), and others.

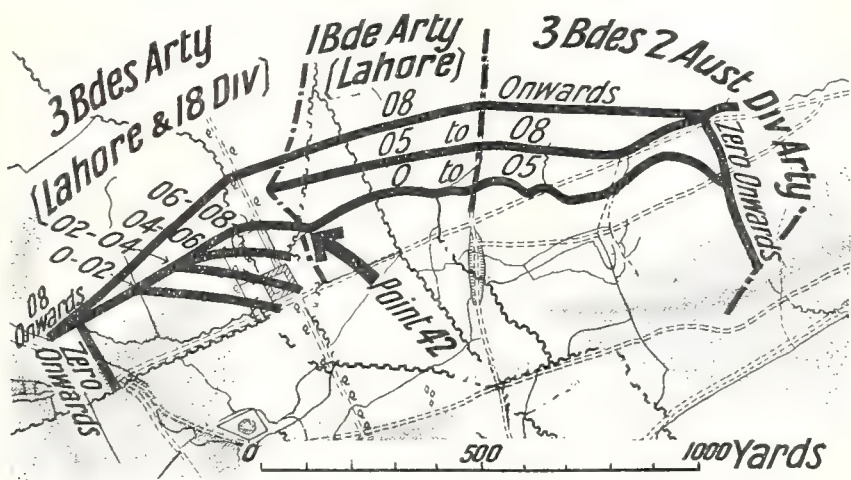
<sup>94</sup> The main part of the 50th in reserve occupied Tom's Cut and Park Lane, and, in accordance with its orders, redug both those shattered trenches. They had to be retaped under heavy shell-fire by Capt. J. Churchill Smith, and Lieut. J. A. Smith (of Murray Bridge, S. Aust.).

<sup>95</sup> Lieut. E. L. Cheney, M.C.; 50th Bn. Dealer; of Mitcham, S. Aust.; b. Warrington, Lancs., Eng., 8 Nov., 1891. Died of wounds, 12 March, 1918.



decision,<sup>96</sup> it could muster, thrusting at Thiepval from three directions, but only in four selected sectors. Three miles to the right of the Australians the Fourth Army, with the Sixth French Army on its right, would at noon launch the main effort preparatory to the mid-September offensive towards Guillemont and the Combles area. These were the chief goals of the day, Mouquet Farm and the neighbouring ridge being only important secondary objectives.

The attack on the Fabeck Graben (High Trench) on the right was to be made by the 49th Battalion in four waves; but that against the farm was ordered by General Cox to be delivered "in great strength and depth." The 51st, which would undertake it, was accordingly assembled south-west of the farm in seven waves. Between the 51st and 49th a sector of the Fabeck Graben would be attacked by the 52nd; but the two left-hand platoons of that battalion were to assist in the capture of the farm by rushing it diagonally from the south-east. The barrage was necessarily complicated, its western half being arranged to suit the attack on the farm, and the right half to suit the advance on the ridge. To



Field Artillery Barrage, Sept. 3.

<sup>96</sup> That it could be allowed no fresh troops (see p. 648).

prevent the left of the 52nd from running into the barrage covering the 51st, Point 42 was not to be directly attacked in the first instance.<sup>97</sup>

The assembly had been so prompt that the troops had six hours to lie at their starting-point. The night was cold, and they had no overcoats; but many slept so soundly that their officers were seriously anxious lest a German patrol might stumble upon them. An orange glow was fringing the clouds in the east when the barrage fell. The screen of smoke-bombs laid upon the left flank by Lieutenant Holland and a detachment of the "Special Brigade," R.E.,<sup>98</sup> was completely successful, no interference being suffered from Point 54 throughout the engagement.<sup>99</sup> On the right the first wave of the 49th easily seized its first objective, Kollmann Trench, the second wave moving past it into shell-holes to act as a screen. But the barrage was timed to remain on the second objective—Fabeck Graben—only three minutes, and, as that trench lay 100 yards or more ahead, the time for its capture by the third wave was very short. Moreover, as sometimes happened where the German garrison had no deep dugout to shelter in, its members were in the trench ready to use their rifles and machine-guns as soon as they perceived that the barrage had lifted from them. Consequently part of the left of the 49th was repulsed, and some who entered the trench appear to have been driven out into shell-holes.<sup>100</sup> But the Queenslanders rallied and took part of the Fabeck Graben. The old gun-pits on the right were cleared with bombs, two machine-guns and a number of prisoners captured, and barricades erected on both flanks. The position attained lay on the summit, with a wide view reaching from Courcelette to the distant spires of Miraumont or

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<sup>97</sup> See sketch of barrage. The left flank of the 52nd was, by divisional orders, to direct itself 75 yards east of Point 42, for whose capture, however, it was responsible.

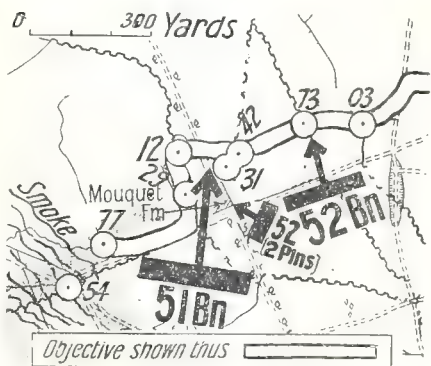
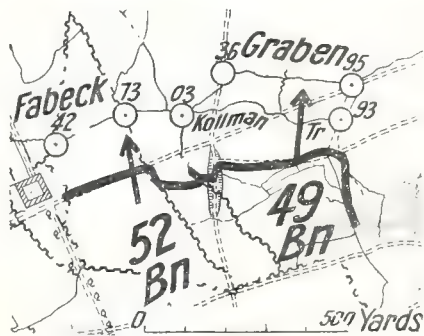
<sup>98</sup> They had emplaced their mortars in Skyline Trench.

<sup>99</sup> The detachment of the 50th at Point 77 also safeguarded the flank. Cpl. S. G. Mortimore (of Bowden, S. Aust.), in charge of the Lewis gun detachment, had the whole of his gun's crew hit beside him during the fight.

<sup>100</sup> According to one account, they were bombed, and the word was passed to retire.

Grandcourt. Captain Fortescue, one of the few officers remaining unhurt,<sup>101</sup> believed that the battalion was occupying its whole objective—the rectangle 36-95-93-03—and this was so reported.

The left battalion of the Brigade, the 51st, had met with equal success. An approach-line leading straight to the farm had been taped by Lieutenant Louch, and, carrying out a form of attack which they had already practised, the companies of Captain McCallum<sup>102</sup> and Lieutenant Clifford,<sup>103</sup> forming the first four waves, had crept forward very close to the preliminary barrage;<sup>104</sup> when it lifted, they followed it diagonally over and past the rubbish-heaps and reached the western end of the Fabeck Graben (12-31), almost precisely as was intended, but did not take Point 12.<sup>105</sup> The fifth, sixth, and seventh waves (formed by the third company under Captain



<sup>101</sup> On this day the 49th reported Lieuts N. M. Little, L. N. de L. Grove, F. Reininger, and T. Wilkinson killed, and Capts. H. W. J. Rhead and P. Adsett and Lieut. W. M. Provan wounded. Other officers were at once summoned from the reserve. On the 4th and 5th Lieutenant P. F. M. Stuart was reported killed, Capt. H. L. Swain and Lieuts. F. H. Bridgman and G. C. Allen wounded, and Lieuts. L. Keid and P. J. Carrodus missing (both were killed). (Little belonged to Blackall, Q'land; Grove to Inverell, N.S.W.; Reininger to Nambour, Q'land; Wilkinson, Swain, and Carrodus to Brisbane; Rhead and Stuart to Rockhampton, Q'land; Adsett to Clayfield, Q'land; Provan to Toowoomba, Q'land; Bridgman to Pittsworth, Q'land; Allen to Ipswich, Q'land; Keid to Graceville, Q'land.)

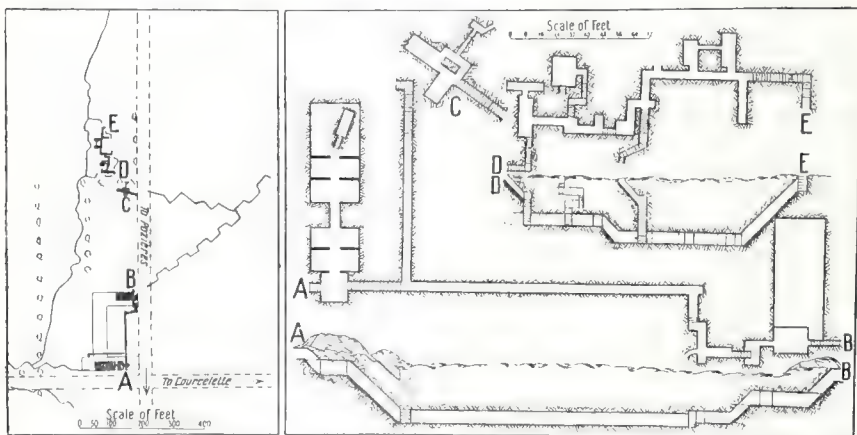
<sup>102</sup> Capt. D. McCallum, 51st Bn. Bank clerk; of Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 4 Sept., 1893. Killed in action, 3 Sept., 1916.

<sup>103</sup> Lieut. A. G. Clifford, M.C.; 51st Bn. Farmer; of Donnybrook, W. Aust.; b. Nhill, Vic., 1889. Killed in action, 3 Sept., 1916.

<sup>104</sup> A few men were hit.

<sup>105</sup> A warren of dugouts. It is possible that they did not observe the entrances. It is uncertain whether the two companies went a little beyond them or stopped just short of them (see footnote 129 on p. 851).

Williams<sup>106</sup> and the bombers) stopped at the farm and began to bomb all discoverable entrances to the underground works. The chief of these was found to be inside a cellar (A in the sketch map), a dark stair with about twenty-five steps



### THE DUGOUTS AT MOUQUET FARM

The sketch on the left shows the location of the front (A-B), centre (C), and rear (D-E) systems, and that on the right shows their details (in plan and, in the case of front and rear systems, in section). The D-E dugouts (*and also C, if it then existed*) were about Point 12 and were not captured by the Australians. The C system was incomplete when captured by the British on 26 Sept., 1916.

leading down to the main gallery. The bottom of this entrance had been barricaded with a loop-holed partition made of wood. The 51st fired a Lewis gun down the stairway, and bombs were thrown by both sides through the hole. A smoke bomb was then flung down, but its white fumes blew back up the shaft. A captured German was next sent to the bottom of the stair to advise his countrymen to surrender. He came back to say that they had retired along a passage. A guard was therefore put over this entrance and attention turned elsewhere. A machine-gun which during these operations had opened fire from behind some rubble-heap ("damnably close," as one account states) was silenced by the random throwing of bombs in the direction of the noise.

The two left platoons of the 52nd also reached the farm from the south-east according to plan. One of their officers,

<sup>106</sup> Capt. H. de N. Williams, 51st Bn. Public servant; of Perth, W. Aust., and Melbourne; b. 9 April, 1893. Killed in action, 3 Sept., 1916.





61. "K" TRENCH AND "PARK LANE," NORTH OF POZIÈRES

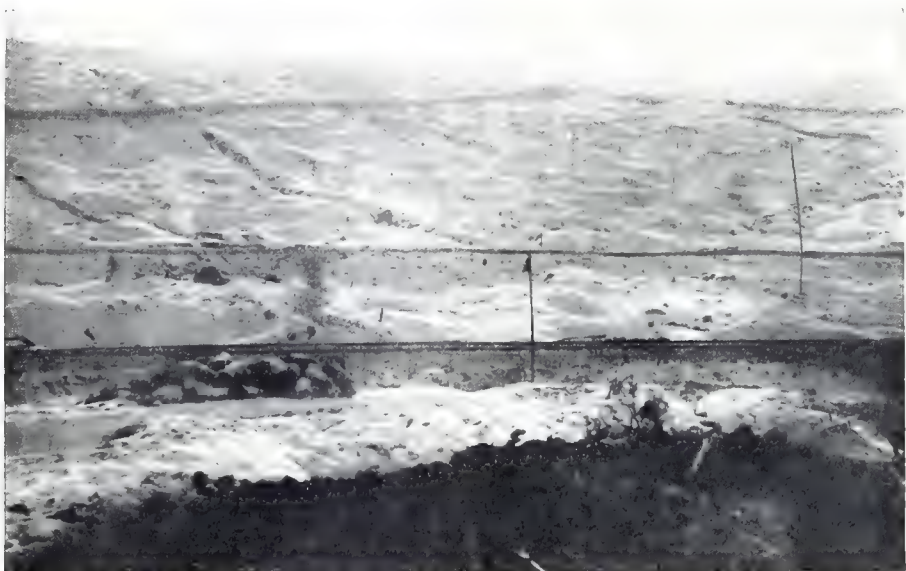
Air-photographs taken on the evening of 22nd August, 1916, during one of the many German bombardments of the Australian communications. Park Lane (crossed by two sunken roads) runs across the centre of the picture, with "Ration Trench" ("Fifth Avenue") continuing it to the left. The communication trench leading up to them is "K" Trench. The front line lies beyond the top of the picture. The left-flank boundary of the I Anzac Corps area was the Thiepval road, which runs up the left half of the page.



62. THE "QUARRY," NEAR MOUQUET FARM

The photograph was taken on 27th November, 1916, some weeks after the end of the fighting in this area.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E565.*



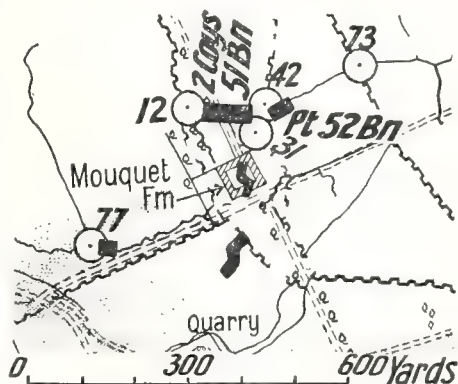
53. THE SLOPE DOWN WHICH LAY THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNICATIONS SOUTH OF MOUQUET FARM

The view is from The Quarry. Park Lane lay along the summit of the ridge shown, and troops advancing from it had to move down this slope, the upper part of which was exposed, at 300 yards' range, to German positions near the farm. This photograph was taken during the following winter in order to show how the whole surface of the area had been broken with shell-holes. (The road, railway, and telegraph poles did not exist at the time of the fighting for the farm.)

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E201.  
Taken on 4th February, 1917.*

*To face p. 845*

Lieutenant Taylor,<sup>107</sup> had been killed, and a second, Lieutenant Dickson,<sup>108</sup> wounded. But about thirty men under an N.C.O. reached the north-west corner of the farm and helped the 51st to clear it. By 7.30 brigade headquarters<sup>109</sup> had heard from Captain Williams that Mouquet Farm had been taken, with the exception of a few dugouts which were being dealt with. Lieutenant Morell<sup>110</sup> organised men to bomb these, and shortly afterwards the Germans from below ground—about fifty in number—emerged from an exit (B on the map) sixty yards north of that which had first been bombed, holding up their hands in token of surrender. Captain Williams placed his headquarters in a cellar at that end of the farm (B), and set his own men and those of the 52nd to dig a trench through the débris towards Clifford's and McCallum's companies, which were entrenching themselves 100 yards beyond. The remaining company of the 51st was in rear, digging forward from the "jumping-off" trench to the farm. Australians were at work all over the area, and the farm appeared at last to have been firmly seized. About 6.30, however, as the British barrage died down, the fire of German machine-guns on the forward troops increased to great intensity. Lieutenant Bailey<sup>111</sup> (the successor of



<sup>107</sup> Lieut. J. B. H. Taylor, 52nd Bn. Blacksmith; of Wilcannia, N.S.W.; b. Wilcannia, 15 July, 1893. Killed in action, 3 Sept., 1916.

<sup>108</sup> Lieut. R. Dickson, 52nd Bn. Bank clerk; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Northcote, Vic., 22 June, 1892. (Dickson met and captured a German coming into the open with a machine-gun. He made his prisoner carry the gun back to the Australian lines.)

<sup>109</sup> Brigade H.Q. and those of the 51st were in the same dugout near Pozzières cemetery.

<sup>110</sup> Capt. H. H. Morell, M.C.; 51st Bn. Grazier; of Richmond district, North Queensland; b. Wollongong, N.S.W.; 15 Sept., 1893.

<sup>111</sup> Lieut. F. W. S. Bailey, 51st Bn. Railway clerk; of Subiaco, W. Aust.; b. Melbourne, 22 Jan., 1895. Killed in action, 3 Sept., 1916.



McCallum, who had been wounded and sent to the farm), ordered Sergeant Ramshaw<sup>112</sup> to scout to the right and ascertain if that flank was in touch with the 52nd. Ramshaw returned with the news that there were Germans in the trench.

The 52nd (Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia), which should have taken the enemy's line between the 51st and 49th, was a battalion of magnificent material, but—through undue adherence to a system of seniority<sup>113</sup>—most unevenly commanded. Among its company leaders, however, was a senior officer, who whatever his shortcomings, possessed the personality and character to command. Captain Littler, the best-known personality on Anzac Beach, and almost the last to leave it at the Evacuation, was a Tasmanian who had served in the Philippines. His contact with the Americans may have rendered him rash in the expression of his opinions, and to that quality, even more than to the beard which he then wore, had been due his nickname of "Duke of Anzac" and, probably, the slowness of his promotion. He had two sons serving in the A.I.F. with rank almost equal to his own, and was now growing old for his work, and, perhaps, a little embittered. But as a brave, honourable, and experienced leader, the whole battalion looked up to him as to no other. Although sent away with malaria just before the attack, he contrived to rejoin, to the great relief of his subordinates. At La Boisselle on the eve of the fight he told his young officers, who were laughingly arranging for the reversion of their boots or revolvers when the owners "went west,"<sup>114</sup> that he would carry no weapon but his stick. "I have never done so, and I don't see why I should begin now." This would be his last fight, he added.<sup>115</sup> Among the younger officers were several of fine mettle, in particular two brothers, known as "big and little

<sup>112</sup> Sgt. L. Ramshaw (No. 2010; 51st Bn.). Wheelwright; of Geraldton, W. Aust.; b. Geraldton, 1890.

<sup>113</sup> The defect lay in the principles of selection followed in the reorganisation in Egypt.

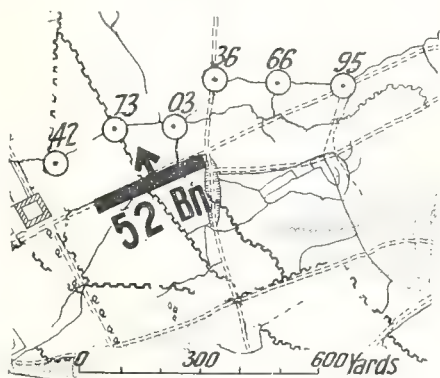
<sup>114</sup> The soldiers' term for dying.

<sup>115</sup> Apparently he expected to be invalided and re-enter the American service in the Philippines.



Maxwell,"<sup>116</sup> of 6 ft. 5 in. and 6 ft. 3 in. respectively, the taller of whom (known also as "Shorty") was then intelligence officer of the battalion, and the junior a subaltern of Littler's company. For some reason the commander of the 52nd (who himself was wounded on reaching the trenches)<sup>117</sup> had not made his junior officers reconnoitre the ground over which they were to attack; but "Big" Maxwell had made up for this by visiting every corner he could reach and then personally seeing each of the company commanders, as they lay out waiting to attack, and making sure that they knew the direction for their advance. He thus discovered a few minutes before the start that what should have been the right flank company was lying along the sunken road in "Süd V" at right angles to the objective. It was barely hurried thence by Littler into its proper situation when the barrage fell and, in the half-light of dawn, the 52nd advanced.

The troops, advancing towards the enemy line and then pausing in shell-holes for the barrage to lift, were apprised of the lift by the din of an enemy machine-gun. Here, as in front of the 49th, the enemy had no deep dugouts to shelter in; a machine-gun was ready to fire, and men of the German machine-gun corps, whose bravery was not surpassed in any army, had opened fire as soon as they could discern figures to shoot at. Captain



*For clearness, only the main body of the 52nd Battalion is shown, the flanking units being omitted.*

<sup>116</sup> Sons of a Tasmanian bank manager, and students at the Hawkesbury Agricultural College, N.S.W. When troopers in the 3rd Light Horse Regiment, they had attracted the attention of General (then Major) Glasgow, who observed them, as he thought, needlessly digging, in the floor of the trench, a hole which they then filled with a sandbag. It was for "Shorty" to stand in when sniping' (see *Vol. XII*, plate 93).

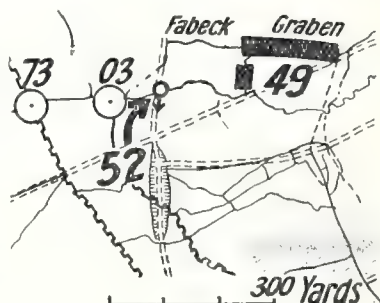
Capt. A. M. Maxwell, D.S.O., M.C.; 52nd Bn. Station manager; of Hobart; b. Hobart, 8 June, 1888.

Capt. D. S. Maxwell, M.C.; 52nd Bn. Farmer; of Hobart; b. Hobart, 8 Jan., 1892.

<sup>117</sup> The command then passed to the senior major, Lane.

Massey,<sup>118</sup> leading the right of the 52nd, was killed close in front of the gun, and "Little" Maxwell found that the men on his right front had turned and were moving back past him. This movement was spreading, and Maxwell, with a Lewis gun sergeant named Black,<sup>119</sup> was busily persuading his men and others to "sit down in shell-holes and wait a bit" when he discerned Littler leaning heavily on a stick, with blood oozing from a gash in his leg and apparently hit through the chest also. "My boys have gone back on me, Maxwell," he said. On being tenderly urged to care for himself, he replied "I'll reach that trench if the boys do." Maxwell asked him for his stick, and then, waving it and shouting in a big voice not unlike Littler's, led a rush of the men around him and entered an isolated sector of enemy trench.

Close on his right, however, the machine-gunner, with barbed wire in front of his gun, was still firing, and, when the 52nd began bombing towards it along the trench, enemy bombers, throwing from craters, held them back. Maxwell therefore at first barricaded this flank and tried to get touch with part of the company on his left, which had reached the trench under Lieutenant Wilson.<sup>120</sup> Wilson was never seen again, and Maxwell,



after establishing a barricade, turned again to his right. At this stage a sergeant of the 52nd named Swift,<sup>121</sup> whose son<sup>122</sup> had been killed at the Landing, crept out between the trench and the wire with a rifle, and presently reported that he had shot the machine-gunner who had barred that flank.

<sup>118</sup> Capt. H. E. M. Massey, 52nd Bn. Draughtsman; of Queenstown, Tas.; b. Mount Wycheproof, Vic., 23 March, 1891. Killed in action, 3 Sept., 1916.

<sup>119</sup> Lieut. A. B. Black, D.C.M.; 52nd Bn. Farmer; of Harvey district, W. Aust.; b. Cranbourne, Vic., 30 Dec., 1886.

<sup>120</sup> Lieut. J. B. Wilson, 52nd Bn. Civil servant; of Torrensville, S. Aust.; b. Norwood, S. Aust., 11 Sept., 1892. Killed in action, 3 Sept., 1916.

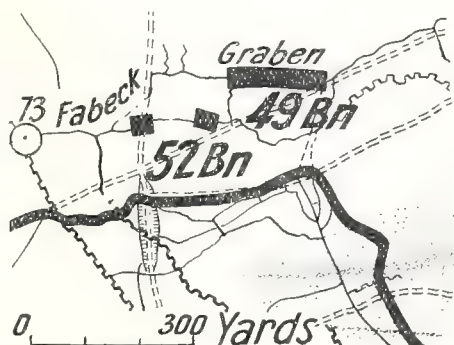
<sup>121</sup> Sgt. J. A. Swift (No. 3899; 52nd Bn.). Plumber; of Sandy Bay, Tas.; b. Bellerive, Tas., 1870. (He himself was killed by a shell next day.)

<sup>122</sup> Pte. T. W. W. Swift (No. 1242; 12th Bn.). Clerk; of Sandy Bay, Tas.; b. Hobart, 1894. Killed in action, 25 April, 1915.

Maxwell found that he could now push out his own bombers into craters. They drove back those of the enemy, and, advancing very quickly—passing the German machine-gunner lying dead across his gun—descended in a sap, some distance in front, a line of Australian heads. The 52nd raised a cheer. Some forty Germans—probably the bombers—hiding in craters near by, heard it, stumbled to their feet, and surrendered;<sup>123</sup> and the 52nd joined with the 49th. Thus Littler's objective was taken; but he himself never reached it. Later he was searched for, and found lying dead in front of the German machine-gun position, towards which he had evidently struggled.

Of the officers of the 52nd in the front of the attack, nine were killed and two wounded.<sup>124</sup> Its men were scattered, some falling back on Park Lane, and "Little" Maxwell, with Sergeant Black as his right hand man, was left commanding its chief remnant in the front line. Endeavouring again to probe for the companies on his left, he found Germans in strength in a northward-leading trench, and, his men being too few for more extension, he built three successive barricades and held fast. His reports, sent by runners after each new development, promptly reached his commander, Major Lane, at battalion headquarters.<sup>125</sup>

A quarter of a mile to Maxwell's left, part of the left company of the 52nd under Sergeant Cutts<sup>126</sup> had, indeed, reached a battered length



<sup>123</sup> They were sent to the rear in charge of four wounded Australians.

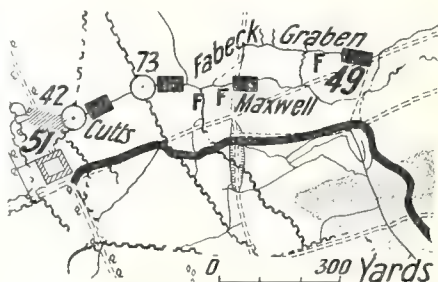
<sup>124</sup> The 52nd lost Capts. Littler, Massey, R. R. R. Ekin-Smyth, and J. McNamara, and Lieuts. J. B. Wilson, E. C. Main, G. S. Reinecke, J. B. H. Taylor, and L. L. Wadsley killed, and Lieut.-Col. M. F. Beevor and Lieuts. C. Blakney and R. Dickson wounded. (Littler belonged to Devonport, Tas.; Massey to Queenstown, Tas.; Ekin-Smyth to Adelaide; McNamara to Launceston, Tas.; Wilson to Torrens-ville, S. Aust.; Main to Brisbane; Reinecke to Kensington Park, S. Aust.; Taylor to Wilcannia, N.S.W.; Wadsley to Cygnet, Tas.; Beevor to Adelaide; Blakney to Hobart; and Dickson to Perth, W. Aust.).

<sup>125</sup> In this fight some reports arrived at Brigade H.Q. half-an-hour after leaving the front line.

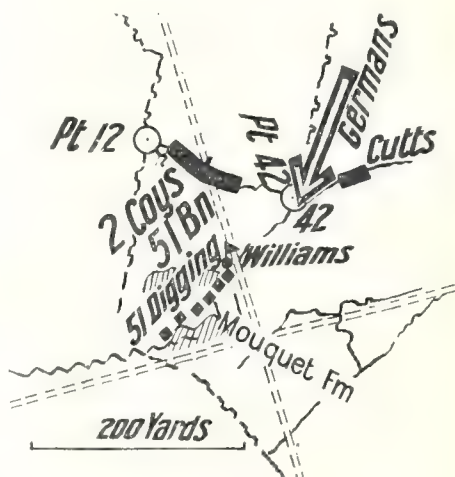
<sup>126</sup> Lieut. H. J. Cutts, 49th Bn. Grazier; of St. Leonards, Tas.; b. Launceston, Tas., 16 Feb., 1890.

of the Fabeck Graben, between Points 42 and 73. They were in view of the 51st, one of whose officers came to them from the farm and left with them a Lewis gun; but they were weak and did not extend to Point 42, beyond which they could see the main line of the 51st digging in.

Such was the situation at 8 o'clock. Headquarters was anxious at the absence of news that the 51st and 52nd were joined; but in the advanced line of the 51st and 49th there were no misgivings. About 8 o'clock, however, Germans began to appear in the communication trench leading to Point 42, and were shortly afterwards seen between the advanced line of the 51st and the party of the 52nd on its flank. The commander of the latter, Sergeant Cutts, ran to the farm to inform company headquarters. The small detachment of the 52nd at the farm was accordingly sent forward. But at that moment an enemy bombardment—partly of 9-inch shells<sup>127</sup>—began to fall upon the farm. The fate of the supporting party is unknown, but it did not reach Cutts, who had returned to his men. He had no bombs.<sup>128</sup> The Germans, though heavily fired on by the 51st, were thrusting in at Point 42



*Positions in which troops or flares were seen by air-observer at 8.30 a.m. are shown in black. F, F, F mark the points at which he saw flares. Position of 51st Battalion beyond Farm is hachured.*



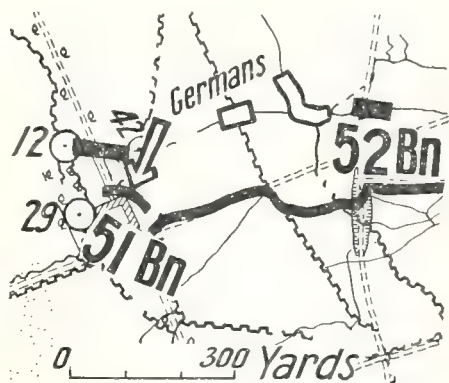
<sup>127</sup> One of these blew up one of the captured German machine-guns.

<sup>128</sup> Some men whom he had sent for them were never heard of again.



in numbers much greater than Cutts's party, and attacking with bombs. Cutts therefore ordered a withdrawal to the farm.

The sight of the 52nd falling back with the Germans hopping from shell-hole to shell-hole in pursuit came as a shock to the 51st. As its advanced line was now "in the air," Clifford appears to have made his way to Bailey and suggested a withdrawal to the farm. Bailey replied that orders were to hold on at all costs. This, therefore, they decided to do, in the meantime asking for instructions. Captain Williams at the farm sent them fifty men, and with the rest, including Cutts's party, formed a second line, bent back around the ruins. The situation quickly became desperate. Lieutenant Bailey, stepping back from the front to give an order, was killed. Clifford, sitting on the back of the trench, continued



to urge his men to dig. A message was received that, if not reinforced, he would have to bring his line nearer to the farm. Then a note—

Being hard pressed. Enemy bombing up our trench from both ends. Strong point in our left rear<sup>129</sup> has not been cleared, as they are sniping from our rear. Trench half-full of wounded and dead—can't get (them) back. Can a party be organised to clear strong point? If not, it will go hard with us. Only have about 30 men with me. No sign of a communication trench to us from farm as yet. Lost trace of 52nd. Believe we have got too far. 8.30 a.m.

Lieut. Clifford.

This was the last message received from the two advanced companies. Shortly afterwards, under fire from the attacking enemy and heavy bombardment, the rear party at the farm, now reduced to two wounded officers and thirty men, fell

<sup>129</sup> Either Point 29 or Point 12. If the latter, the two companies must, as Clifford suspected, have gone a little too far and missed that vitally important point. But they could hardly have missed the central dugout ("C" on p. 844) also, if it then existed; and air-photographs afford ground for believing that it did exist.

back. The Germans reaching the north-east corner of the ruins had underground access to all parts of them. Within a few minutes a *minenwerfer* began to fire from the place. The two companies were then completely surrounded. In vain during the following night patrols probed for them.<sup>130</sup> Years afterwards it was learnt that, when the Germans attacked, all bombers and machine-guns were ordered to the flanks. The Lewis gun on the right jammed. Lieutenant Smythe<sup>131</sup> on that flank sent word to Clifford that he was being bombed out. The answer was: "Hang on at all costs." Clifford was presently shot through the head. Smythe sent to the left for more bombers, but only two unwounded men<sup>132</sup> reached him. With the enemy now bombing from shell-holes in rear, Smythe gave the word to make for the farm, but it was then too late. He was killed and a certain number captured, including many wounded lying in a crater behind the trench.<sup>133</sup> Eight years later officials of the Graves Commission found beyond Mouquet Farm a trench filled with the bodies of Australians. There is little doubt that they were a remnant of the lost companies.<sup>134</sup>

The gap on the right of the 51st had become known to General Glasgow, who at once sent a company of the 50th to the old front line south-east of the farm, from which, if

<sup>130</sup> The 51st Battalion after dark sent out four patrols, each of four men. Next morning one of these was missing. Three men of a second, and four of a third, were wounded; the fourth patrol returned with two men of the lost companies who had been wounded at an early stage when things were going well, and could give no later news.

<sup>131</sup> Lieut. E. G. Smythe, 51st Bn. Commercial traveller; of Claremont, W. Aust.; b. Woollahra, N.S.W., 16 Aug., 1892. Killed in action, 3 Sept., 1916.

<sup>132</sup> Company Quartermaster-Sergeant S. Edwards (of Mount Bryan, S. Aust.), and Private T. E. Peake (of Albany, W. Aust.) Both Edwards (wounded) and Peake were eventually captured. In April, 1918, Edwards and a French sergeant (Levasseur) escaped from near Lechfeld, and succeeded in reaching Switzerland, 100 miles distant.

<sup>133</sup> Lieutenant W. A. Halvorsen (of Perth, W. Aust.), very badly hit, tried to reach the Australian lines on Sept. 4, but was again shot through the body and captured. Sgt. Ramshaw was picked up by enemy stretcher-bearers on the 5th. Sgt. L. A. Parsons (of Korrelocking, W. Aust.), shot through both legs, lay in a shell-hole and wrote to his brother a letter which was afterwards found on his body. On the night of Sept. 12—nine days after the attack—a Canadian patrol under L/Cpl. J. W. Stevenson, 2nd Can. Mtd. Rifles Battalion, found three Australians of the 51st Battalion in No-Man's Land near the south-west corner of the farm. Two of them were badly wounded, and the third, Pte. M. Doohan (of Sydney) had stayed with them, feeding them with bully beef and other food for which he had foraged at night among the dead.

<sup>134</sup> Of the officers of the 51st engaged, only two returned, and those both wounded. The rest, except one badly wounded and captured, were killed. Those killed were Capt. D. McCallum, C. S. Dawkins, Lieuts. F. W. S. Bailey, A. G. Clifford, C. H. Smith, E. G. Smythe, D. G. Campbell, A. R. Dunkley, W. Brown. (McCallum belonged to Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.; Dawkins and Bailey to Subiaco, W. Aust.; Clifford to Donnybrook, W. Aust.; Smith to Perth; Smythe to Claremont, W. Aust.; Campbell to Walgett, N.S.W.; Dunkley to Fitzroy, Vic.; and Brown to Liverpool, N.S.W.)

possible, it was to counter-attack; but, finding the old front line practically empty, the commander of this company withdrew his men to The Quarry. The Germans in the farm, according to their own records, now penetrated to ground south of that occupied by them before the attack. The next of Glasgow's reserves—a company of the 13th Canadian Battalion—was now ordered by him to take over this corner. Firmly led by its commander, Major MacPherson,<sup>135</sup> guided by "Big" Maxwell, it occupied during the afternoon the old line and sap-heads.

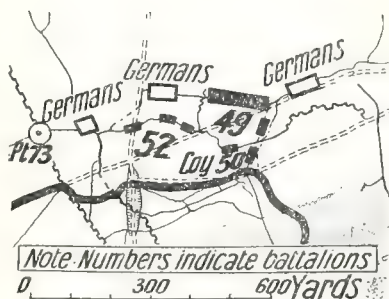
Thus the Australian thrust had been again defeated, except on the crest of the ridge. There the 49th, supported by a company of the 50th under Captain Todd,<sup>136</sup> dug itself deeply in and held firm; the battle then resolved itself into a desperate struggle by the fraction of the 52nd under "Little" Maxwell to safe-

guard the 49th's flank.<sup>137</sup>

Reinforced about 11 a.m. by some bombers with a supply of grenades, he had about ninety men—parts of three companies. The Germans

broke in on his left and were in turn driven out. They next appeared 100 yards in front, and he was strongly urged

by Captain Fortescue of the 49th to attack them; but, having already to defend over 200 yards of trench, he decided against this proposal. The position was indeed threatening, and the troops were tired and, as the hours wore on without help arriving, increasingly depressed. At 3.25, however, the 52nd's bombers again came up with a supply of bombs. Five minutes



<sup>135</sup> Major J. D. MacPherson, M.C.; 13th Canadian Infantry Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada).

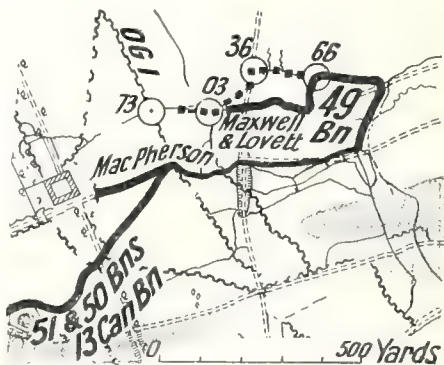
<sup>136</sup> This company—a weak one—was sent up through the barrage to the 49th's support trench (the first objective), on which the bombardment chiefly fell, and dug it 6 feet deep. (Capt. D. L. Todd, 50th Bn. Clerk; of Thebarton, S. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 29 June, 1891.)

<sup>137</sup> The messages with which this young officer, little more than a boy, kept his superiors informed of the progress of this long fight, are in the Australian War Memorial. Maxwell's party included Lieut. Blakney, Coy. Sgt.-Major L. A. Renou, Coy. Sgt.-Major G. S. Feist, Sgts. A. B. Black, E. G. Hodge, B. W. Addison, G. M. Livesey, A. Cook, P. Norman, and E. W. McQuaid. (Blakney belonged to Hobart, Tas.; Renou to Cannington, W. Aust.; Feist to Mount Kokeby, W. Aust.; Black to Harvey district, W. Aust.; Hodge to Port Adelaide, S. Aust.; Addison to Hobart; Livesey to Semaphore, S. Aust.; Cook to Perth, W. Aust.; Norman to Albany, W. Aust.; and McQuaid to Tasmania.)



later across the open in rear there was seen approaching a wave of men in kilts, and into the trench there jumped a full company of 250 men of the 13th Canadian Battalion under Captain J. H. Lovett.<sup>138</sup> They had been sent forward by Glasgow up the sunken road in "Süd V,"<sup>139</sup> and by extraordinarily good luck—since Maxwell's position was not where it was supposed to be<sup>140</sup>—reached almost without loss its extreme flank post. The 13th were Scottish Canadians,<sup>141</sup> and to the weary Australians this support came like a draught of strong wine; they could not have been reinforced by better troops.<sup>142</sup> Active sniping was at once recommenced. Captain Lovett, though much senior to "Little" Maxwell, took the wise but unusual step of placing himself under his direction. As each Canadian had brought two bombs, Maxwell asked him to take over the bomb-fighting on his left.

About this time important changes came over the direction of the battle. At 3 p.m. General Birdwood and the Anzac staff left Contay for Ypres, handing over control to the Canadian Corps staff under Lieutenant-General Byng. At 6.30 p.m., it being then certain that all the Reserve Army's attacks except this one had failed, General Gough suspended all other operations, but confirmed an order already issued by Glasgow for safeguarding the captured high-ground by joining it up through Point 73 and O.G. 1 with the line in front of



The dotted line shows the position at first believed to be held.

<sup>138</sup> Lovett himself had preceded his troops and was in the trench when they arrived.

<sup>139</sup> This was one of the two Canadian companies which had replaced the 50th in Park Lane about 1 p.m. This company also was guided to the sunken road by "Big" Maxwell.

<sup>140</sup> See the sketch, and p. 856.

<sup>141</sup> Their title was "The Royal Highlanders of Canada."

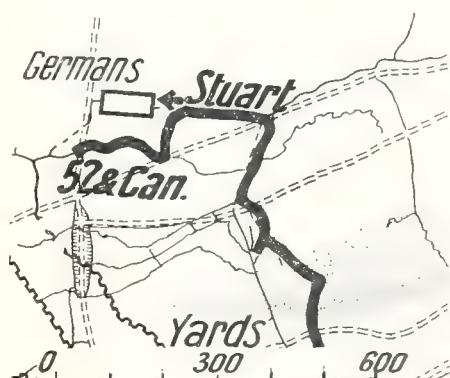
<sup>142</sup> An Australian, who was at Gen. Glasgow's H.Q. when Major MacPherson (commanding the second company of these Canadian reserves) was being directed by Glasgow to the front, wrote: "He (MacPherson) was a man nearing middle age, erect, tough as wire, with lines on his face such as hard fighting and responsibility leave on the face of every soldier. An Australian (Glasgow) explained to him quietly where he wished him to take his men . . . it meant plunging straight into the thick of the Somme battle with all its unknown horrors—everyone there knew that. But the newcomer said quietly, 'Yes, Sir,' and climbed up and out into the light . . ."



Mouquet Farm. The two Canadian companies in the line (Lovett's and MacPherson's) were ordered to do this, the remainder of their battalion (the 13th) being now brought in to relieve the 51st south and east of the farm.<sup>143</sup>

About 6 o'clock Lovett's Canadians bombed to the left—Maxwell's men extending to keep touch—but were driven back. Thenceforward to the end of the battle, Lovett's and Maxwell's troops fought as one body. Dawn on September 4th found their position unchanged, and the enemy again massing in front. He attempted to advance, and, on being stopped, began sniping vigorously from a westward extension of the 49th's front line.

On Captain Swain<sup>144</sup> of the 49th being informed, the bombing officer of that battalion, Lieutenant Stuart,<sup>145</sup> with Lance-Corporal Scott<sup>146</sup> at once organised an attack. At its commencement Stuart saw a white handkerchief waved from the German position. Jumping on to the parapet to beckon the



enemy in, he was instantly shot.<sup>147</sup> Captain Swain decided not to continue the attack; but the Germans had already

<sup>143</sup> Canadian Corps Headquarters, not perhaps fully realising the nature of the conditions around Mouquet Farm or the extent to which the Canadian troops there had been already tried, somewhat extended the orders of Glasgow and Cox by directing that the 13th Battalion should during the night capture the farm. This, being impossible, was not carried out. The orders of Cox and Glasgow also were based partly on misapprehension—it having been reported that Australians or Canadians were at and beyond the north-eastern corner of the farm (where troops—probably German—had been seen by an aeroplane observer) and at or near 73 (where Maxwell had reported himself to be). The orders could not be carried out literally, but their intention was eventually fulfilled (as will be seen) by the Canadians joining up their lines through the sunken road in "Süd V."

<sup>144</sup> Major H. L. Swain, M.C.; 49th Bn. Secretary; of East Brisbane; b. Leytonstone, Essex, Eng., 28 Nov., 1882.

<sup>145</sup> Lieut. P. F. M. Stuart, 49th Bn. Jackaroo; of Rockhampton, Q'land; b. Rockhampton, 1894. Killed in action, 4 Sept., 1916.

<sup>146</sup> Sgt. T. M. Scott (No. 2675; 49th Bn.). Sugar worker; of Bundaberg and Gin Gin, Q'land; b. Maroondan, Q'land, 17 June, 1891. Killed in action, 5 April, 1917.

<sup>147</sup> For this and many deplorable incidents, treachery cannot fairly be imputed. The raising of the white flag was probably unknown to the German who fired, and in any case he was not bound by it unless it was raised with proper authority and answered in the proper manner.

been suppressed. On one who had surrendered to Maxwell's party was found a map<sup>148</sup> which showed that the 52nd and 49th were not so far to the left as they had believed. Maxwell, having confirmed this discovery by comparison with an aeroplane-photograph possessed by Fortescue, at once reported it.<sup>149</sup>

Twice on this day, when a gathering of Germans on the flanks threatened a counter-attack, the rockets sent up by the 49th for artillery barrage brought no response,<sup>150</sup> but on each occasion the enemy was easily driven off. At 3.30 p.m., however, a smashing bombardment of artillery and trench-mortar fire suddenly descended on the left half of Maxwell's and Lovett's position. The Tasmanians had now been fighting for thirty-five hours, and the Canadians for over twenty-four, but their spirit is evidenced by the following note:

Are out of food and water. Have given orders to broach iron rations. Sending prisoner back by messenger.

D. S. Maxwell, Lt. A Coy.

P.S.—Believe Captain (Lovett) said "52nd men were quite knocked out." Rot, we are going strong. D.S.M.

This bombardment, however, exterminated the entire garrison of the sector on which it fell. Hurrying through to the farthest barrier, Maxwell, with a Canadian sergeant named Mackenzie, found three bombers under a Canadian subaltern still holding, but, in the last 150 yards of trench behind them, none but dying or badly wounded men. Lovett and Sergeant Black<sup>151</sup> had been seriously hit. Determined to uphold the flank of the 49th, Maxwell cleared the bombarded sector of all but the dying, shortened his line, and built a new and stronger barricade just short of the well-defined edge of the bombardment. Withdrawing his men a

<sup>148</sup> This was a British map, apparently taken from the body of some Australian officer at the middle or end of August.

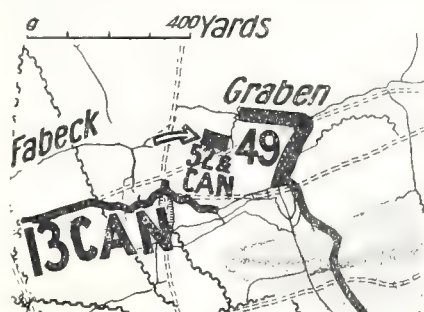
<sup>149</sup> See sketch on p. 854. The mistake had been due partly to the non-existence of trench 03-36, partly to the trench south of 66 being mistaken for the sunken road south of 36.

<sup>150</sup> The reason possibly was that the artillery of the 2nd Australian Division was on this and the next day being relieved by that of the 18th British and 1st Canadian Divisions. The Lahore Divisional Artillery was transferred on Sept. 5 to the 3rd Canadian Division, but was not relieved by that of the 2nd Canadian Division until Sept. 10. The 4th Australian Division on leaving the Somme was allotted the artillery of the 3rd Canadian Division.

<sup>151</sup> Black, badly hit through the neck, urged that if he could not fire a Lewis gun he could sit by and instruct others how to do so.

stone's throw farther, he, with five volunteers, Australians and Canadians, returned and sat down behind the barricade, awaiting the anticipated attack.

This did not come; but the enemy artillery by some means quickly located the new barrier, and a howitzer battery began to feel for it, the four shells falling every three minutes close about the barrier, and sprinkling the small party with earth. To turn their minds from the fatal burst which must soon come, they began to tell each other stories of wheat-growing, comparing the methods of Canada and eastern and western Australia<sup>152</sup>—until the inevitable shell crashed in their midst, killing or wounding all except Maxwell. He withdrew<sup>153</sup> twenty yards, waiting for attack, and at dusk, when the fire eased and no attack came, at once returned to the nearest barrier, now broken. He had by then only some forty men, Australians and Canadians, but with a companion he lay most of the night ahead of his men, guarding the flank.



*German Pressure indicated by Arrow.*

Will try to hold on where I am (he reported) and recommend relieving force to occupy R. 28 c. 54 to R. 28 c. 22 (*i.e.*, as far as the sunken road in "Süd V"—the connecting link with the left now suggested by the brigadier).

This during the night he succeeded in doing. His men were then so exhausted that, when a greater shell than usual began regularly to fall, they would be wakened by its shriek, fall asleep, and be wakened again by the explosion. But they held till a company of the 16th Canadian Battalion reached and relieved them and was guided by Maxwell through the now empty trench to the neighbourhood of his original barricades. Pushing out thence with their bombers, the Canadians joined up the line as intended. The 49th,

<sup>152</sup> The party included Sgt. Mackenzie (from Manitoba) and Coy. Sgt.-Major Renou (from Western Australia).

<sup>153</sup> After attending to the wounded. One of Maxwell's small party, a lad of the 52nd, himself mortally wounded, insisted that the others must be attended to before himself.

delayed by fresh enemy pressure, was relieved at dawn on September 5th. The Commander of the 3rd Canadian Brigade, Brigadier-General Tuxford,<sup>154</sup> at 8.30 a.m. took over from General Glasgow. The commander of the 1st Canadian Division (Major-General Currie<sup>155</sup>) had relieved General Cox at noon on the 4th.

Thus, after one of the bitterest fights in the history of the A.I.F., part of the Fabeck Graben was won; and, with this single success, Gough's encircling attack upon Thiepval ended. The 13th Brigade lost 41 officers and 1,305 men,<sup>156</sup> but the troops were conscious that they had won and held what was considered an important objective. One who saw them at Pozières towards the end of that exhausting trial wrote: "The way was absolutely open . . . and others were bending low and running hurriedly. . . . Our men were walking as if they were in Pitt Street, erect, not hurrying, each man carrying himself as proudly and carelessly as a British officer does."

On the German side, arrangements for the projected counter-attack<sup>157</sup> by the Guard Reserve Corps had been almost completed when the Reserve Army's offensive interrupted them. The German attack was to be made by fourteen companies, each 200 strong. Preliminary orders had been issued by the corps, part of the troops on September 2 sent into training at Grevillers,<sup>158</sup> and September 5 proposed (but not yet approved by Army) as the day of the attack. Several times, however, within the last few days "lively movement" behind the Australian lines had caused the German divisional staffs to expect an early attack. The local artillery appears to have been strengthened on August 29 by the addition of the 3rd Guard Reserve F.A. Regiment<sup>159</sup> to that already in the line. As a further precaution two companies of the II/64th R.I.R. were sent up every night from the Zollern Redoubt to the new trench ("Mouquet Riegel") north of the

<sup>154</sup> Brig.-Gen. G. S. Tuxford, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. Commanded 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, 1916/19. Motor car dealer; of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada; b. Penmorfa, Carnarvonshire, Wales, 7 Feb., 1870.

<sup>155</sup> Gen. Sir Arthur Currie, G.C.M.G., K.C.B. Commanded 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, 1914/15; 1st Canadian Division, 1915/17; Canadian Corps, 1917/19. Principal of McGill University, Montreal, since 1920; b. Napperton, Ontario, Canada, 5 Dec., 1875.

<sup>156</sup> The detailed casualties were—

				Officers.		*Other Ranks.
49th Bn.	..	..	..	13	..	417
50th Bn.	..	..	..	1	..	76
51st Bn.	..	..	..	13	..	365
52nd Bn.	..	..	..	12	..	438
13th M.G. Coy.	..	..	..	2	..	9

Lieut. J. B. Moncrieff (of Mitchell, O'land) of the machine-gun company was killed, and Lieut. W. M. Cousins (of Trundle, N.S.W.) wounded.

<sup>157</sup> See p. 822. The name given to this enterprise was *Urlaub* ("Leave").

<sup>158</sup> That night, by an accidental fire which trapped them in the cellar of a billet, 17 of the party from the 5th Guard Grenadiers were killed and 32 injured.

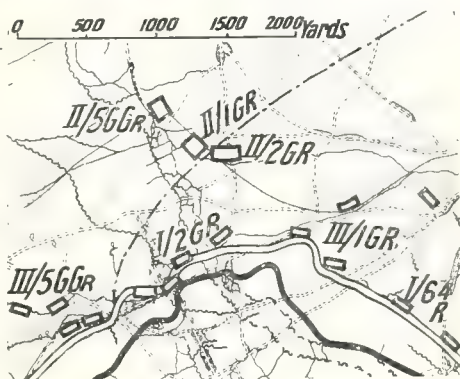
<sup>159</sup> Covering the 4th Guard Division.



farm. Towards evening on September 2 the 4th Guard Division reported to corps headquarters that the British trenches near Mouquet Farm and the Leipzig Salient were filling with troops, and that an early attack must be expected. The artillery was therefore turned upon these positions.

Early next morning the two companies of the 64th had just returned from their advanced night station when the British barrage opened. The 5th Foot Guards now held Point 54; and, though that point may have been screened by smoke, a supporting company of the 5th Guard Grenadiers farther back is said to have poured heavy fire into the flank of the Australians attacking the farm, standing up to shoot and firing almost with impunity.

The Prussian Guards fought extremely well, as they had done throughout this period; but, like other troops, they were now showing some signs of exhaustion. Although the Australian communications lay bare to them at a few hundred yards' range, they had frequently refrained from sniping, lest artillery-fire should be drawn upon them.<sup>160</sup>



*Disposition of German forces near Mouquet Farm on Aug. 31. By Sept. 3 the Guard Grenadiers had been relieved by the 5th Foot Guards.*

Those captured at the farm afterwards said that they had expected the preliminary bombardment to last much longer, and that, when the Australians came "with"—and not after—the shell-fire, there had been no chance of resisting. The immediate counter-attack was made by the III/1st Guard Reserve Regiment, from north-east and, later, from north. The two companies of II/64th were also sent back to assist by attacking from the north-west. In addition, parts of the 5th Foot Guards were at some stage employed. The I Battalion of the Guard Grenadiers was held ready, as were the orderlies and clerks of headquarters, being organised into detachments for defending the rear trenches north of the farm. By 11 o'clock the 1st Guard Reserve Regiment had taken seventy prisoners of the 4th Australian Division; but it had used all its available reserves, and had therefore to call back its II Battalion, which only the previous night had been sent back exhausted to billets in Haplincourt. Further heavy attacks against the farm were reported at noon (possibly the advance by the 50th and, later, the 13th Canadian Battalion), and the 1st Guard Reserve Division is said to have incurred heavy casualties in repelling them.

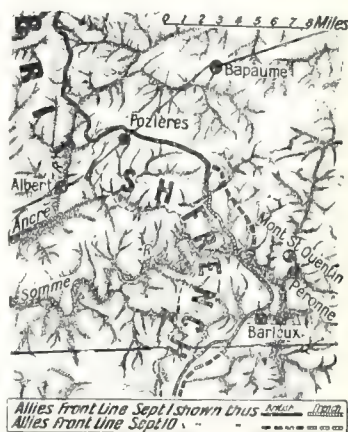
The loss of part of the Fabeck Graben, between which and the Zollern Graben half-a-mile away no further trench existed, was seriously regarded by the German corps staff. A counter-attack was therefore planned, but was eventually postponed as being likely to

<sup>160</sup> It was to this fear that Gen. Glasgow and Major Dickinson, visiting the line before the battle, apparently owed their lives.

prove too expensive unless deliberately prepared. The pressure upon the 49th and 52nd Australian Battalions seems therefore to have been caused by local reserves feeling for their enemy or trying to take up the positions allotted to them. So exhausted was the 1st Guard Reserve Division that it was feared that another attack might find it incapable of resisting. The average strength of its battalions in the front line had fallen to 150. Accordingly, on September 4 it was reinforced by the 133rd R.I.R. (which relieved the 64th R.I.R.), and a battalion of the 93rd R.I.R. (4th Guard Division) was also lent to it for use at the farm.

On September 5 the 1st Guard Reserve Division began to be relieved by the 45th Reserve Division. Next day the 4th Guard Division also declared that it could no longer guarantee the power of its troops to withstand strong attack, but the corps commander was of opinion that it had not yet reached the limit of its power of endurance. As the most pressing operation was now the recovery of the lost sector of the Fabeck Graben, the project of recapturing Pozières heights—"Urlaub"—was finally abandoned.

With the relief of the 49th, 50th, and 52nd, the participation of the Australians in this phase of the Somme battle, and also the battering operations against Mouquet Farm, came to an end. The Fourth Army had succeeded at Guillemont, and in the next few days the French reached Cléry-sur-Somme—a starting point for possible operations against the Bapaume-Péronne ridge. But on September 5th, by order from Haig, the Reserve Army's task of securing Thiepval before the mid-September offensive was given up. Seven times the Australians had been launched from the head of their salient against these defences. Only the last and greatest effort had resulted in any gain of value, and that on a front so narrow that no troops in the world could have retained it against deliberate counter-attack. Such a counter-attack occurred early on September 8th, when, after two days' concentrated bombardment, in which the 16th Canadian Battalion suffered terrible loss, the enemy, attacking during the "change over" of the 14th and 7th Canadian Battalions, retook the Fabeck Graben.



German accounts show that the recapture of the lost section was the result of a planned raid undertaken by troops of the 1st Guard Reserve Regiment assisted by some of the III/64th. This was the last operation of the Guard Reserve Corps before its withdrawal. The Germans claim to have retaken Kollmann Trench as well—both trenches had been practically demolished by shell-fire. The losses of the Guard Reserve Corps in the Mouquet Farm fighting were heavy, the whole period being described as among the severest experienced by these troops. The 4th Guard Division (relieved on September 12) lost in three weeks 50 officers and 3,150 men; complete figures for the 1st Guard Reserve Division are not available, but 1,171 are said to have been lost in the fighting of September 2-4.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> The history of Mouquet Farm after the 1st Canadian Division took over the front may be shortly told. The Canadians reported six German counter-attacks (Sept. 8 morning and evening, Sept. 9 morning and evening, Sept. 10 and 11), of which only that of the 8th succeeded. They themselves were not allowed to attack the farm until after the great advances of Sept. 15, when Courcellette and part of the Fabeck Graben near it were captured. The 3rd Canadian Division had now taken over the left, and it was proposed that it should seize part of the Zollern Trench and thence attack Mouquet Farm from the east, so many attempts by the Australians from the south having been defeated. But the preliminary movement on Sept. 16 failed, and this plan was abandoned. As, however, the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles had raided the farm on the 15th (Point 73 was raided at the same time without success), an attempt was now made to capture it by somewhat similar methods on the night of the 16th. The 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles succeeded in over-running the farm, seizing and breaking down the dugout entrances. A trench intended to encircle the ruins was then begun, and the capture of the farm was regarded as complete—though Germans could still be heard working in some passage underground—when, about 2 a.m., the mounted rifles were relieved by the 11th British Division (the Canadian front was being shifted farther east). Whether the interned Germans found an opening and filtered back into the farm, or whether the relief was not completely carried out, is unknown. The encircling trench was not finished, and the farm remained in German hands. It was not until Sept. 26, when by an advance on the greater part of its front the Reserve Army (the attacking force—from left to right—being the 2nd and 1st Canadian and 11th and 18th British Divisions) took Thiepval and Zollern Redoubt, that Mouquet Farm was at last overrun. Even then, when sweeping through and on both sides of the ruins the 11th Division captured the Zollern Redoubt, fifty-five Germans under an officer held out in the farm dugouts until the end of the day, when they surrendered to a working party of the 6th East Yorkshire Regiment (Pioneers).

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE EFFECTS OF POZIÈRES. REST AT YPRES

THE fighting from which the Australians had emerged was in some respects the heaviest they ever experienced, and in two directions had a potent effect upon Australian affairs. First the casualties—which, in proportion to the numbers engaged, were the greatest ever suffered by the I Anzac Corps—precipitated the effort for conscription and fixed the number of reinforcements which had to be raised; second, the strain of the fighting, which—taking it over the whole corps—was unapproached by that of any other battle of the A.I.F., inevitably affected the attitude of the Australian troops towards the war, and necessitated a new basis for the discipline of the A.I.F.

The I Anzac Corps had lost in this battle 23,000 officers and men—the 1st Division 7,700, the 2nd 8,100, and the 4th 7,100. As the 5th Division had lost 5,300 in the feint at Fromelles, the Australian force in France had in less than seven weeks suffered more than 28,000 casualties<sup>1</sup>—an average of over 7,000 for each division. Nearly all these occurred in the infantry brigades and their attached units. This rate of loss was almost exactly the same as that in the forty-one British divisions engaged in similar fighting in the same battle,<sup>2</sup> but it extended over practically the whole

<sup>1</sup> Of these, less than 200 were prisoners, and at least half of this 200 were wounded.

<sup>2</sup> The losses of the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Australian Divisions in their first visit to the Somme area appear to have been slightly higher, on the average, than those of other divisions similarly engaged. The figures (excluding those for 5th Aust. Div.) are:

			<i>British Divisions.</i>					
Guards	..	7,304	17th	..	11,320	35th	..	4,549
1st	..	7,368	18th	..	6,213	36th	..	5,482
3rd	..	8,997	19th	..	6,597	38th	..	3,876
4th	..	6,239	20th	..	6,854	39th	..	7,512
5th	..	6,184	21st	..	8,510	41st	..	5,928
6th	..	6,966	23rd	..	5,070	46th	..	2,648
7th	..	7,237	24th	..	5,619	47th	..	7,570
8th	..	5,492	25th	..	8,298	48th	..	7,175
9th	..	7,517	29th	..	5,829	49th	..	8,461
11th	..	5,367	30th	..	9,430	50th	..	8,105
12th	..	7,679	31st	..	4,854	51st	..	4,022
14th	..	7,643	32nd	..	5,532	55th	..	7,574
15th	..	8,065	33rd	..	8,667	56th	..	4,243
16th	..	4,330	34th	..	9,859			



of the Australian army in France, and for Australia the problem of replenishment was immediate and insistent. Under the British system, infantry reinforcements amounting to ten per cent. of the strength at the front were maintained for the Australian, as for other, divisions at the bases in France; but these—including the “entrenching battalion”<sup>3</sup>—were quickly consumed by the Pozières fighting, and as early as August 7th Birdwood was showing anxiety as to the supply and asking Reserve Army to urge the transfer of larger numbers from England. The request was duly forwarded, but a statement of the available troops, furnished on August 9th to the War Office by Colonel Anderson, who was in charge of A.I.F. Headquarters in London, showed that there were then only 13,408 Australian reinforcements in England, and that considerations of training would permit only 4,378 to be sent to France within the next three weeks and another 2,872 in three weeks after that. Several thousand more were in Egypt, the infantry reinforcements and sick and wounded in that country not yet having been completely transferred to England. Another 6,257 were on the way to England from Australia, but would not complete their training for two months after arrival.

Thus, even before the Mouquet Farm fighting, it had become apparent that the Australian infantry divisions could not be brought up to strength either in the near future or—if they had meanwhile to undertake more fighting like that of Pozières—before the end of 1916. The higher commanders were aware that, as Haig's policy was to maintain

<i>Australian.</i>			<i>New Zealand.</i>			<i>Canadian.</i>		
1st	..	7,654	N.Z.	..	7,408	1st	..	7,635
2nd	..	8,114				2nd	..	6,816
4th	..	7,058				3rd	..	6,555
						4th	..	4,311

[The 63rd (R.N.) Division did not enter the battle till November 13, and its loss (4,043) is therefore not included. The 34th Division included two brigades from the 37th, and the 21st one, but the losses cannot be apportioned, and are therefore counted to the 34th and 21st Divisions.]

The average for the first visit to the Somme (including one or more tours at short intervals) is thus: British, 6,722; New Zealand, 7,408; Australian, 7,609; Canadian, 6,329. The average loss for the whole battle (up to November 19) is: British, 8,133;\* Canadian, 6,329; New Zealand, 7,408; Australian, 8,960. If the action at Fromelles is counted as part of the Somme fighting, the 5th Australian Division would be included, and the average loss in the Australian divisions would be 8,045.

\* The 37th Division is here included among the divisions engaged.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 177-178.

the Somme offensive without intermission, another call upon all reliable divisions was highly probable. It was therefore necessary for Birdwood to look to other sources from which to reinforce his infantry.

Several reservoirs might be available, but the most obvious were the Australian light horse in Egypt and the 3rd Australian Infantry Division, then training under General Monash on Salisbury Plain. Birdwood had always looked forward to the day when the 3rd Division, joining the other four in France, might render possible the formation of a national Australian (or Australian and New Zealand) army.<sup>4</sup> He was therefore greatly opposed to borrowing troops from the 3rd Division, much more to breaking it up; but he heard that this step was being considered at the War Office. Consequently on August 15th he wrote to Major-General Woodward, Director of Organisation, strongly urging the other course. "If the whole of the mounted troops could be got away from Egypt, so much the better"; except for the Anzac Mounted Division and its necessary reinforcements,<sup>5</sup> all light horse units and reinforcements should be brought from Egypt as reinforcements for the infantry in France. The 3rd Division should remain intact at least until the Australian force had again suffered loss, when, if necessary, drafts might be taken from its battalions without breaking it up.

I feel confident the Australian Government would much dislike the idea of breaking up this division, on the formation of which they laid much stress. . . . Rather than break up the 3rd Division, I feel confident that the Commonwealth Government would be quite willing to send a larger percentage of reinforcements so as to keep their five divisions going. I think therefore that . . . the Commonwealth Government (should) be informed as to the percentages thought necessary . . .

Almost immediately after the despatch of this letter, Birdwood heard from Colonel Anderson, in charge of A.I.F. Headquarters in London, that the Adjutant-General had summoned him to the War Office and informed him that the Army Council had decided upon one of two courses—either to disband an Australian division (which could only be the 3rd), or to borrow from it sufficient men to make the

<sup>4</sup> The War Office had said that the formation of such an army "has always been our intention" (*see p. 156*).

<sup>5</sup> That is, reinforcements amounting to 6 per cent. of its strength.

other divisions up to strength. Anderson added that he had telegraphed this information to Australia. Birdwood felt strongly that in a matter of such importance Anderson, who was his representative, should have consulted him before cabling to Australia. Rightly or wrongly, he and White suspected that, in their attitude towards the 3rd Division, the authorities in England were being influenced not solely by military considerations, but by a desire to assist towards a political end, of which signs were now appearing large on the horizon. This was the promotion of conscription in Australia.

Conscription had been adopted in England on the 24th of January, 1916, though in a form which allowed large numbers of eligible men to slip through the net and left the British Army still short of reinforcements. A cry was already being raised for the tightening of the system. In Australia, too, a large section of the people felt bitterly that the voluntary system was not merely inadequate, but illogical and unfair, and that the time had come when the "slacker" and "shirker" should be compelled to enlist. A bill to establish conscription had been introduced in the Parliament of New Zealand in May and was passed on June 10th. It was practically certain that the Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, who had been carrying through England a fiery cross,<sup>6</sup> was convinced that compulsory service must be established in Australia also. When on July 31st he returned thither, half the population was waiting breathlessly, like one great audience, for him to say the word. But the political situation was not a simple one; his relations with his own party (Labour) were complicated; Hughes personally was in favour of compulsion, but leaders had to be sounded, and the word so eagerly awaited remained, for the time being, unspoken.

It chanced that precisely at this juncture the huge casualties of Pozières and Fromelles furnished an obvious argument for compulsion. The people of Great Britain, who had applied conscription to themselves, were naturally eager for the dominions to do the same. The Australian colony

<sup>6</sup> The term applied to his speeches by Sir Charles Lucas in *The Empire at War*, Vol. III, p. 32.

in England shared this desire. What influences, intentional or unintentional, may have affected decisions at this crisis can only be guessed; the facts are probably forgotten, even by the chief actors. Hughes was in touch with Keith Murdoch in London, and that powerful Australian journalist was in the confidence not only of Colonel Anderson and other Australian leaders in England, but of Lloyd George, Bonar Law, and Lord Northcliffe. The suggestion that it might be necessary to break up the 3rd Division originated almost certainly in London. But so completely was it opposed to the policy of the War Office four and a half months later—when Australia was urged, in spite of the admitted shortage of reinforcements for five divisions, to furnish a sixth—that it is hard to believe the Army Council was not, at least unconsciously, swayed by a political motive. Even combined with the assurance added in Colonel Anderson's telegram—that the proposal to break up the division had for the present been rejected—the implied threat would obviously be a powerful lever towards the desired decision. "I may tell you a piece of news which will help your conscription campaign in Australia," was the comment with which Bonar Law (then Secretary of State for the Colonies) informed Keith Murdoch of the Army Council's resolution.

Birdwood immediately endeavoured to avert the threatened step. He cabled to Australia his regret that Anderson had telegraphed without consulting him, and added that he had a plan by which he hoped any interference with the 3rd Division might be avoided. The first item of his proposal—to send for the camel companies and part of the light horse—though taken up by the War Office, failed of acceptance, the Commander-in-Chief in Egypt replying on August 28th that the Anzac troops were "the keystone" of that country's defence. Meanwhile the War Office itself had informed General Monash that it had been decided to draw upon his division, and had asked him to say how many of his infantry were ready trained, and how many would be so within three months. Monash, warned by Anderson that from 3,000 to 6,000 would be taken, accepted this decision most loyally; but he was desperately anxious to save the division, and, to that end, determined



that equal drafts should be taken from each battalion. He reported that 2,800 (233 from each battalion) could be spared at once, and these, on an order from the Southern Command, were duly transferred by September 9th as reinforcements to the Training Centre.

But only a fraction of the shortage had thus been met, and a further shortage might occur after an autumn offensive. Monash was therefore warned that drafts might be taken from the 5,460 who would be ready by mid-October. To replenish his and the other divisions after these prospective losses, the War Office fell back on the second proposal in Birdwood's letter to Woodward, and recommended that Australia should send greatly increased reinforcements. The scale for the monthly drafts had, in accordance with a recommendation from the War Office early in 1916, been fixed at—

- 15 per cent of the strength of the infantry,
- 6 per cent of the light horse,
- 3 per cent of the artillery (gunners and drivers),
- 4 per cent of the engineers and signal service.

This entailed the sending from Australia of 11,790 officers and men every month (of whom 11,346 were for service in France). That quota had been sent with fair regularity—10,000 in February, 5,500 in March, 12,100 in April, 13,200 in May—until the despatch of the 3rd Division had interfered. The numbers had dropped to 6,600 for June, 3,400 for July, and 6,500 for August.<sup>7</sup> Having in mind a forecast of further heavy fighting upon the Pozières scale, Birdwood and White had suggested that the rate for infantry reinforcements should for three months be raised to 25 per cent., increasing the monthly drafts to 16,500, and that, in addition, a special draft of 20,000 should be asked for. These proposals—which would provide 35,000 men in addition to such as could be scraped together in England and Egypt and the normal monthly arrivals (11,346)—were adopted without alteration by the Army Council, which on August 21st asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies to recommend them

<sup>7</sup> Behind these there were normally training in the camps in Australia from 50,000 to 60,000 men, the reservoir for future drafts.

to the Australian Government. The cable forwarding this request, which went forward on August 24th, produced in Australia consequences so momentous that it is worth quoting in full:

It is desired by Army Council that your Government be informed that it will be necessary to draw on 3rd Division for reinforcements owing to heavy casualties recently suffered by Australian Divisions in France. They therefore recommend that in addition to the normal monthly reinforcements a special draft of 20,000 infantry be sent as soon as possible to make good present deficit and so enable 3rd Division to be again brought up to strength. They recommend further that for three months following despatch of this special draft the monthly reinforcements of infantry sent should be calculated at 25 per cent of establishment, that is, about 16,500 per month for five divisions. This is the only means of retaining 3rd Division for service in field, though the Army Council are aware that the provision of this additional personnel may greatly inconvenience your Government in training and other arrangements.

This staggering demand, though ultimately found to be enormously in excess of the need, was sincerely made, and, as such, was accepted. In the cablegram agreeing to it, the Australian Government on August 31st pointed out that, according to figures dated August 29th, there were 45,000 Australians (including the 3rd Division) in dépôts and camps in England, besides 15,000 then on the sea. But the previous day, at the opening of Parliament in Melbourne, the policy of the Government had been declared. The British Government, Hughes explained, had specified the number of men required, namely, 32,500 in the next month, and 16,500 monthly thereafter; the enlistments of the last three months—6,375, 6,170, and (to August 23rd) 4,144—proved that the Government could not depend upon the voluntary system to supply them. The Australian people would therefore be asked by a referendum to vote upon the issue—whether, for military service overseas, compulsion should be instituted.

The whole of that crucial episode pertains to another volume of this history.<sup>8</sup> It must suffice here to say that, although this method of settling the question, unattempted in any other country, threw Australia into a maelstrom of

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<sup>8</sup> Vol. XI—*The Effort in Australia*.

internal strife such as she had never known, and undoubtedly injured the maintenance of the force which it was intended to assist, yet an impartial student of Australian affairs will not easily satisfy himself that, if the issue had to be faced, any other course could have been more prudently or honourably adopted.

While in this direction the Pozières fighting was the occasion, and in a minor degree the cause, of the gravest trouble suffered by Australia in the war, and one whose effects persist to this day, in another direction it had results more transient and limited, but for a time equally potent. Although a large proportion of the troops quickly recovered their spirits, it was not within human power to shake off in a few weeks all the effects of such an experience. Pozières set the standard by which enemy shell-fire was ever afterwards measured in the A.I.F., subsequent experiences being described as "better (or worse<sup>9</sup>) than Pozières." No village in the parts of the Somme area afterwards known to the Australians—not even Gueudecourt—was so completely erased by shell-fire.<sup>10</sup> Strangers who visited the battlefield during the following years were much impressed by the ruins of Le Sars and Flers, of which the wreckage could be seen, but not by Pozières, the reason being that at Pozières no ruins above-ground remained—not even enough for mending the roads, which was the fate of most of the Somme villages. The place had become an open moorland, and the visitor passed through it without suspecting that a village had ever existed there.<sup>11</sup>

The subjection of the troops a second time to the strain of the drawn-out bombardments at Pozières had undoubtedly, in the case of certain overstrained units, been unwise, and would probably have been avoided if the staff had possessed

<sup>9</sup> "Worse than Pozières" was usually hyperbolic. More intense bombardments were indeed suffered—*e.g.*, by the 11th Battalion at Bullecourt—but never any approaching in duration those at Pozières.

<sup>10</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plates 231, 242.

<sup>11</sup> Ginchy had possibly received as much shell-fire (mainly, of course, from the British guns); but its construction was probably more solid than that of Pozières, so that more traces remained. The sight which most impressed Australians on the Somme was Delville Wood, in which the tangle of trunks prevented the work of salvage and burial, and the battlefield remained for many months almost as the struggles of July, 1916, had left it.

a true conception of the conditions. No other division, for example, after loss such as that of the 2nd Australian Division in its first tour, was sent back for a second immediate tour,<sup>12</sup> and many were thoroughly rested after much slighter loss than that of the 1st Australian Division.

Tonight we hop over (wrote an infantryman<sup>13</sup> of the 6th Battalion during its second tour beyond Pozières). Our nerves are bad, and the heads are keeping us hard at it.

This overstrain had two outstanding results. In the first place it imbued some men with a horror of shell-fire stronger than their self-respect. Towards the end of the battle instances had occurred of men refusing to follow their officers, and among the "shell-shocked" men who dribbled to the rear there was a proportion of stragglers. The Pozières bombardments had ripped from their souls the protective coverings of convention, and, although the great majority after a short rest set their teeth and quietly gave themselves up to fate and a renewal of such terrors, a small proportion could never without compulsion face them again. Another class, of coarser fibre, was determined that, come what might, it would never face them. The punishment which till now had been supreme in the A.I.F.—to be returned to Australia in disgrace<sup>14</sup>—had no longer sufficient force with either of these classes; return to Australia would be welcomed by both—by the latter on any terms. As the Australian Defence Act allowed no death penalty except for men found guilty of mutiny or of desertion to or treacherous dealings with *the enemy*, the only punishment for desertion to the rear was now imprisonment. It is true that the Defence Act placed Australians, when on war service, under the operation of the British "Army Act," except so far as the British Act was inconsistent with the Australian. Sentences of death were occasionally passed on them by military courts, but they well knew that these could not be carried out. Both

<sup>12</sup> The 34th Division was sent back to the line after loss nearly as great, but two of its brigades had been replaced by those of the 37th Division.

<sup>13</sup> Cpl. A. G. Thomas (No. 3470; 6th Bn.). Tailor; of Melbourne; b. Liverpool, Eng., 1878. Killed in action, 8 June, 1918.

<sup>14</sup> Instituted by General Bridges in Egypt (*see Vol. I, 1st edn., p. 129*).



in the ranks of the A.I.F. and in the people of Australia there was an invincible abhorrence of the seeming injustice of shooting a man who had volunteered to fight in a distant land in a quarrel not peculiarly Australian. The frequent reading out on parade of death sentences passed on British soldiers<sup>15</sup> much intensified this feeling, and, though most officers and a small proportion of the men saw the need for a death penalty in the case of a small class of criminal offenders, and the Australian Government was more than once sounded concerning its adoption, the general opposition was far too strong; no Government would have dared to flout it. Consequently the A.I.F. henceforth fought without any effective penalty for desertion other than imprisonment, which punishment—in spite of the severity of some military prisons—was mitigated by the well-justified belief that, when the war ended, an amnesty would be granted to military offenders.

The grave difficulties which resulted, but which were probably more than compensated by the contentment of the home people—and, in the A.I.F., perhaps, by a certain added pride—will be discussed as they arise. The second—a more short-lived—consequence of Pozières was a certain bitterness towards the high command. Some of the more thoughtful soldiers wondered (and could not be blamed for wondering) whether any sufficient object was being gained by this excessive strain and loss. The prevailing tactics—repeated shallow advances on narrow fronts—were dreaded and detested. This dislike was not merely expressed after the events; it was felt strongly at the time. A private diary records that on August 7th, when the diarist remarked to General White that he had been “hoping all this preparation was only to bring us into a position to make another attack on a wide front,” the reply was:

I am afraid there doesn't seem to be any sign of it. They seem content to let each little lot plan its own attacks.

Although most Australian soldiers were optimists, and many were opposed on principle to voicing—or even

<sup>15</sup> In the British forces during 1914-19 sentences of death were carried out in the field on 3 officers and 343 soldiers (including camp followers and native labourers). Of these 291 were inflicted upon Imperial troops (240 for desertion, 15 for murder, 15 for cowardice).

harbouring—grievances,<sup>16</sup> it is not surprising if the effect on some intelligent men was a bitter conviction that they were being uselessly sacrificed.

For Christ's sake, write a book on the life of an infantryman (said one of them<sup>17</sup> in a diary-letter under date July 25), and by doing so you will quickly prevent these shocking tragedies.<sup>18</sup>

That an officer who had fought as nobly as Lieutenant J. A. Raws<sup>19</sup> should, in the last letter before his death, speak of the "murder" of many of his friends "through the incompetence, callousness, and personal vanity of those high in authority," is evidence, not indeed of the literal truth of his words, but of something much amiss in the higher leadership.

The Australian reader will ask, and has a right to ask, "was this great effort of our countrymen—so pregnant with trouble for our nation—directed by prudent and capable generalship? Was it guided along lines likely to render a return for which it was worth incurring these crushing casualties?" The Commander-in-Chief, in despatches and appreciations, has virtually answered "Yes." The Australian divisions and the troops opposite Guillemont and Ginchy were fulfilling his set purpose of keeping up pressure on the enemy during the interval between two powerful offensives—those of July 23rd and September 15th. Haig's fixed policy during the whole battle was never to let the

<sup>16</sup> Some of these expressed their attitude differently:—

"We have just come out of a place so terrible (wrote Captain Maxfield of the 21st—one of the most level-headed officers in the force) that . . . a raving lunatic could never imagine the horrors of the last 13 days. . . .

"Nothing published in the papers is worth a damn. . . . There are some astounding tales to be told about the war which will make your hair stand on end when the facts are made public."

Private G. G. G. Angus (of Majorca, Vic.) in his last letter to his father, written after coming out from the first tour at Pozières, said: "I can tell you it makes different men of us over here; it makes you stop to think."

Some evidence of the severity of the conditions is afforded by a statement made by Lieutenant Holland, a British officer responsible for certain arrangements for smoke discharge, who had visited a considerable part of the British front on the Somme. On September 4 he told the Official Australian War Correspondent that no other part of the front had been flayed to the same extent as the Pozières-Mouquet Farm sector. "No troops," he added, "have had to stand the shelling which yours have had to stand."

<sup>17</sup> Cpl. A. G. Thomas, 6th Bn. (see footnote 13 on p. 870).

<sup>18</sup> There is on record a letter from a German in the Pozières sector expressing the same sentiment. After congratulating a friend on losing an arm and so getting away from the front, he adds: "If the dear ones at home could just see this (the conditions of that fighting), there would be an alteration, but they are never told."

<sup>19</sup> Already quoted (pp. 657-660).

enemy have respite; and during this period, in which he was resting and training a large proportion of his troops, there was laid upon a few divisions, which were not to be materially reinforced,<sup>20</sup> the task of "keeping the ball rolling" by constantly attacking, though only on a small scale and at separate points. Haig would probably have admitted that all his troops engaged during this interval were placed under special strain,<sup>21</sup> largely due to the methods employed; and, even if the need for maintaining pressure be granted,<sup>22</sup> the student will have difficulty in reconciling his intelligence to the actual tactics. To throw the several parts of an army corps, brigade after brigade, in a series of battering-ram blows twenty times in succession against one of the strongest points in the enemy's defence, may certainly be described as "methodical," but the claim that it was economic is entirely unjustified. In spite of the British preponderance in the air and in artillery, the repeated assaults from the Pozières salient were, for reasons already explained,<sup>23</sup> almost inevitably more expensive to the attacker than to the defender; they would have been so in a still greater degree had not von Below's standing order—that every yard of lost trench must be retaken—caused much unnecessary loss on the German side also.<sup>24</sup>

Employed in accordance with the tactics already described, the Australian divisions had in six weeks launched nineteen

<sup>20</sup> See p. 648.

<sup>21</sup> Dewar and Boraston, whose views probably represent with accuracy those of the Commander-in-Chief, say: "throughout this second period we had not been putting out our full strength. On the contrary, we had been husbanding it, economising both men and shells to the utmost degree compatible with our policy of exerting constant pressure on the enemy. Our attacks had been of a partial or local character with shallow objectives, putting a great strain, admirably borne, upon the battalions engaged, but setting free a maximum number of troops for rest and training." (*Sir Douglas Haig's Command, 1915-1918, Vol. I, pp. 127-8.*)

<sup>22</sup> Although Haig undoubtedly advocated the maintenance of this pressure for military reasons, it is improbable that all military readers will admit its necessity. The French policy, for example, especially that of Pétain, was in general quite different. Political reasons, however, rendered it advisable for the British to keep up their effort in some form, since French opinion demanded this relief.

<sup>23</sup> P. 731.

<sup>24</sup> This principle appears to have been finally abandoned by von Below on August 23, when he published the following order: "The battle which is now in progress consumes, in defence alone, so many troops that I am forced to issue orders that methodical counter-attacks, beyond minor ones of a purely local nature, are not to be carried out except by my orders." This order closely accords with the policy instituted by Hindenburg and Ludendorff when they were called, a week later, to the Western Front. It doubtless prevented the loss of the Germans in the fighting at Mouquet Farm from being still higher than it was.

consecutive minor offensives<sup>25</sup> in the same corps-sector, on a front seldom of more than a mile and often of less. This scheme of operations ran at great cost but without serious hitch until, like some clumsy machine, it came groaning to a halt in front of Mouquet Farm. The last seven efforts to restart it, undertaken with vast labour and devotion, had resulted only in one or two jerks of the wheels, grinding out through mud and blood a few yards of almost valueless advance. At least once Australians had evidence of what their effort might have effected had the conditions been different. Every leader recognised that the blow delivered on the night of August 4th had been a staggering one to the enemy. "If only the three other Australian, and some British, divisions had been there," General Gellibrand said on returning from his reconnaissance in the small hours of August 5th, "they could undoubtedly have got through." The historian of the 86th German R.I.R., which was hurried forward on the other side to fill the gap, writes of this episode:

It appears almost incomprehensible that the English (*i.e.*, the Australians) did not take advantage of the result attained. They would have been able to thrust deep into our hinterland without coming up against any considerable resistance, for the troops who had received the alarm were not in position . . .

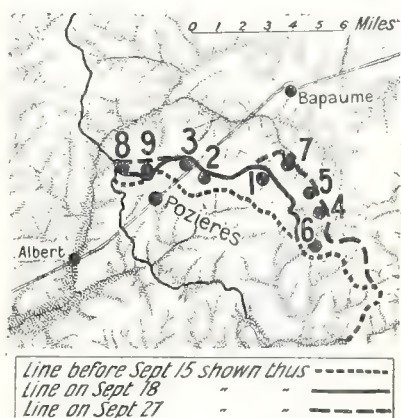
The higher German staff must, of course, have realised as clearly as the British that the reason why no penetration was attempted was the narrowness of the front of attack, which obviously rendered such an attempt hopeless.<sup>26</sup> Little more than a week after the Australians left the Somme, Sir Douglas Haig, having at last accumulated his fresh divisions and received from England the new secret instrument (the "tanks") for which he had been waiting, renewed the wider offensive which he had suspended on July 23rd. As before, throughout the planning of this offensive he had the largeness of mind to insist that his subordinates must mould their

<sup>25</sup> Not including counter-attacks or the small bomb attack of July 21, and counting as one each of the double operations of July 25 and August 18. Sixteen of the attacks were made at night.

<sup>26</sup> On August 7, in answer to a remark from a friend that on the night of August 4 the troops might have taken Courcellette, General White agreed, but said: "We could not get supplies to them--it would be an impossible salient to hold."



arrangements with one end in view, namely that, if a "break-through" became possible, advantage should be taken of the opportunity. The attacking divisions—including the Guards, New Zealanders, and, on the Reserve Army front, Canadians—rolled the enemy from the Second-Line ridge down the slopes of the valley before Bapaume, conspicuous in success being the New Zealanders.<sup>27</sup> By an advance over a wide front on September 15th, Flers, Martinpuich, and Courcellette were taken; by another, launched on September 25th, Morval, Lesboeufs, and eventually Combles<sup>28</sup> and Gueudecourt; by a third on the 26th, in the Reserve Army sector—Thiepval and Mouquet Farm. In these wider operations, with loss proportionately smaller than that of the Australians at Pozieres, the Canadians, New Zealanders, and many British divisions effected results of far greater value.<sup>29</sup> The three Australian divisions at Pozieres struck very hard, and caused much loss and trouble to their local enemy; this achievement, which is admitted in all the histories



- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Flers.        | 2. Martinpuich. |
| 3. Courcellette. | 4. Morval.      |
| 5. Lesboeufs.    | 6. Combles.     |
| 7. Gueudecourt.  | 8. Thiepval.    |
| 9. Mouquet Farm. |                 |

of the German units concerned, was not without military value. But if the strength spent in that most dreadful form of trench-warfare had been either kept for the offensive of September 15th or even employed before that date on a similar principle, can there be any doubt that such blows as were struck on August 4th would have had infinitely greater

<sup>27</sup> This was universally conceded. The New Zealand Division attacked three times. In a congratulatory order Haig stated that "for 23 consecutive days" it had carried out "with complete success every task set . . . always doing even more than was asked of it."

<sup>28</sup> French and British worked round Combles to south and north respectively.

<sup>29</sup> The loss of the New Zealand Division was 7,408, but it advanced more than two miles.

results?<sup>30</sup> For 23,000 casualties, three Australian divisions—trained not perfectly, but as well as the rest of the “New” army—should have secured a return of greater value. The truest criticism of the Pozières tactics seems to be summed up in the comment made by an Australian on August 7th with reference to one of the numerous attacks on Munster Alley:

If we nursed the place and went at it at the same time as at the trenches north of us and at Courcelette, we should break through and do something . . . At present all we are doing is using up the German reserves, and, at a rather faster rate, our own.

The author of the “piecemeal” policy between July 23rd and September 15th was, as has been shown, the Commander-in-Chief; but the actual steps by which that policy was carried out Haig left, as was his wont, almost unconditionally in the hands of Gough; his own control barely went beyond the emission of a few general maxims.<sup>31</sup> The troops were naturally unaware of Haig’s attitude, but Gough had fairly often been in personal touch with the divisional staffs, constantly urging speed—an aim which, though justifiable in other conditions, was dangerous in such narrow-fronted trench-operations. The plan, which he eventually adopted, of attacking the enemy from the southern flank was—within limits—sound; but his keenness, always difficult to stem, led him to seek big strategical objectives, apparently without recognising the tactical difficulties, and he seemed loth to forgo extensive aims even when the means were insufficient. The Australian troops, who learned to hate the reiteration of attacks on narrow fronts, not unfairly attributed to him the responsibility, and their aversion from serving under him, which became pronounced in the following year, dated from this time. Birdwood also, though still beloved by most of the force, incurred a marked loss of popularity in some quarters through the notion that he had too readily offered to undertake impossible tasks. His actual attitude had been to undertake in earnest what was required by those directing

<sup>30</sup> This was the judgment expressed at the time by General Russell of the New Zealand Division. On coming out of the battle he remarked to a friend: “If the Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders, and Guards had been put at it together alongside of one another, I believe they would have gone through. But they wasted the Australians at Pozières.”

<sup>31</sup> For example, the instructions given by Haig or by his chief-of-staff that progress must be “methodical”; and that economy must be sought by careful preparation and choice of objectives and not by stinting adequate force.

the British strategy. The effort of White, repeated again and again, had been to secure thoroughness in preparation—and, for that end, almost invariably, more time. He probably felt more deeply than Birdwood the impossibilities of Gough's tactics, and, had he induced the Corps commander to take the strong stand which he adopted on several occasions later in the war, some of the more impracticable operations would probably have been further modified or abandoned. To this extent White and Birdwood, too, shared the responsibility;<sup>32</sup> but in this, their first introduction to the great operations of the Western Front, neither had yet fully attained the self-confidence which afterwards marked their actions.

Such were the effects of Pozières upon the force, which at the end of August and beginning of September was withdrawn from the charnel-house of the Somme to take over from the Canadians the southern half of the Ypres salient. In normal times the Salient had been by far the most difficult and dangerous sector of the British front. The decision to send them thither for a "rest" after Pozières added to the sense of grievance of a section of the troops. Others, who did not complain, were convinced that their presence at Ypres portended an offensive there. As a matter of fact they were being treated in the same way as other British divisions, except that the Australian divisions, like the Canadian, must, if possible, be kept together. The transposition of the two corps had been arranged more than a month before; and, as the Germans were short of heavy shells, and were themselves transferring tired divisions to the Ypres sector, those devastated flats were experiencing a quietude previously unknown to them. The 1st Australian Division reached Poperinghe—six miles short of Ypres—on August 28th, the 3rd Brigade being for a few days billeted in that town and the 2nd in camps of huts and tents<sup>33</sup> in the neighbourhood. On the 30th the 1st Division (acting under Canadian Corps Headquarters) began to take over from part of the 4th

<sup>32</sup> This accords with General White's own judgment, placed on record by him after the war.

<sup>33</sup> Connaught, Kenora, Victoria, and Ontario Camps, near the villages of Wippenhoek and Reninghelst.

(British) the sector north of Ypres-Comines Canal. On September 10th the 2nd Australian Division (now under the I Anzac Corps<sup>34</sup>) came in on its left as far as the Ypres-Menin road. On the 14th the 4th Australian Division relieved the 4th Canadian in the sector south of the canal. The detached artillery of the 4th Australian Division, which after the Battle of Fromelles had been withdrawn to a back area for short training, and had since been supporting the 4th Canadian, now rejoined its own division. Its diary for October 14th proudly records, after a raid by its infantry: "1,500 rounds expended. Great praise from infantry on our accurate shooting."<sup>35</sup>



The operations carried out during this term at Ypres were unimportant, consisting chiefly of three series of raids undertaken by the divisions there, as by all others holding quiet parts of the British front, in order to occupy the enemy's attention during the Somme offensives of September 15th, 25th, 26th, and October 12th. In reality the main task of this period was the improvement of the defences of the Salient, which—having till then been systematically blown down whenever an attempt was made to repair them—appeared dangerously weak. Wide gaps existed, not only in the rear but also in the front lines, and the avenues of communication lay in some parts open to the enemy. The first measure of the corps commander in assuming control of the sector was to lay down a new policy of works. "The approach of winter," the divisions were told, rendered it necessary "to study our position with a view to . . . making our position more tenable." General Walker of the

<sup>34</sup> Corps H.Q. was on Sept. 3 closed on the Somme and opened at Abeele.

<sup>35</sup> The diary of the infantry concerned (the 45th Battalion) says: "Artillery preparations were very good."



1st Division informed his men that they had probably two months in which work would be possible before their tasks would be interrupted by the winter rain. These and similar instructions caused the troops to believe that they were likely to winter at Ypres, and they undertook with much zest the preparation of (as they believed) their winter quarters. Additional deep-tunnelled dugouts, similar to those on the Somme, were begun; broken-down parapets were remade; a gap of 600 yards in the front line between Mount Sorrel and Hill 60 was reduced; wire was strengthened though not completed; trenches were duckboarded and revetted, and the area was redrained into the streams and "lakes" which served it. Above all, instead of the incomplete reserve-line known as the "G.H.Q. Second Line," there was constructed a new defensive work known as the "Vierstraat Switch," which became one of the main safeguards of the Salient. The light-railway system was extended, and long screens erected to conceal avenues of approach.

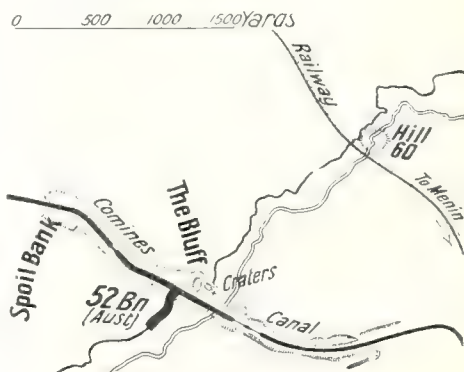
Only the tranquility of the area made this heavy work possible. It is true that the Germans, having received orders to use their trench-mortars instead of their heavy artillery, frequently bombarded parts of the front line with medium *minenwerfer* throwing powerful bombs, nick-named by the infantry "rum-jars"; to which the Stokes mortars of the Australians replied. But in some sectors these bombardments were so characteristically regular—occurring daily between 4.30 and 7 p.m.—that the withdrawal of most of the local garrison beforehand, and the repair of the damaged trenches next day, became matters of routine. The Australian patrols nightly scoured No-Man's Land and for the first time secured almost complete predominance there, few Germans being met with and some of those few captured. Near Hill 60, from which, slight though it was, the Germans possessed a commanding view over the neighbouring British lines, German sniping was sometimes keen.<sup>36</sup> Some

<sup>36</sup> For example, L/Cpl. E. J. Cannon (of Ballarat, Vic.) of the 6th Battalion was sent to the old mill at Verbrandenmolen to make a sketch for General White. Though a keen soldier and warned to be careful, he was observed by the enemy and sniped with a machine-gun.

Australian units "livened up" their sectors,<sup>37</sup> but the general opinion of the area (as recorded in a private diary) was:

On our front the German is positively somnolent.<sup>38</sup> . . . Deader than Armentières . . . We have *never* had such a quiet time. Ypres itself is like the ruins of the Forum on a summer's day—clear sky, no disturbance of any sort, sightseers rambling about quietly without interference. The Somme is our interest at present. Alas, it (the Somme offensive) is held up at the moment (October 4) by heavy rain.

The enemy was known to be mining at certain points, and towards the south the Second Army had a series of deep mines with enormous charges ready for the projected offensive against Messines. About September 24th the Germans were heard tunnelling so close to the great mine at Hill 60 that it became necessary for General Plumer to decide whether to explode it immediately or to do nothing in the hope that they would pass it without discovery. The latter course was adopted, and the enemy tunnel passed within a few feet without alarm. During the occupancy of The Bluff by Australian infantry, two German mines must have been almost ready for blowing, but it so chanced that they were not exploded until just after the sector had been taken over by British troops.<sup>39</sup>



<sup>37</sup> The 51st Battalion found that at night the Germans were accustomed to turn on a searchlight for half-an-hour at a time. They immediately stopped this practice.

<sup>38</sup> When Birdwood was going round his front, one of the garrison remarked to him: "These Germans opposite us are good Germans—they don't fire at us." "Don't you believe it," was his characteristic reply. "The only good German is a dead German."

<sup>39</sup> They were exploded on Oct. 22 at 6.35 a.m., the line being then held by the 47th Division. After the explosion the enemy, as usual, attempted to follow up and seize the craters, but his first effort seems to have been prevented, partly by the machine-guns of the 52nd Australian Battalion (4th Division) from the south side of the canal. He afterwards succeeded, but was immediately driven out by the 47th Division.

Each division had a brigade out of the line in training.<sup>40</sup> A proportion of the officers, especially those newly promoted from the ranks, were sent to schools; a small proportion both of officers and men received leave to England.

It remains to summarise the raids and other minor activities. Those which come first in the summary here given were undertaken by the 5th Australian Division, which, remaining with the II Anzac Corps fifteen miles south of Ypres, near Fleurbaix, began in mid-August to break the quiet which had enveloped that front since the Battle of Fromelles.<sup>41</sup>



(In the subjoined list, raids by Germans are indicated by *italic type*.)

**Minor operations of 5th Australian Division (while the others were on the Somme).**

Aug. 19.—Three officers and fifty-one men of the 57th Battalion entered the German trenches east of the Sugar-loaf Salient; two machine-guns were blown up and one brought back. Several Germans were killed, but none captured. Demolition charges were sent with the raiders, but the two sappers carrying them were both killed.

Aug. 24.—A party of the 8th Brigade attempted to enter the enemy's line, but was prevented by wire.

Aug. 28.—On the suggestion of General M'Cay, a bombardment of the enemy's line was carried out by the 5th Australian and 61st British Divisions, with the object of inducing the Germans to believe that the attack of July 19 was to be repeated. The guns registered from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m.; bombarded from 4 to 4.45 p.m.; checked their registrations from 6 to 8 p.m. Whether the enemy was deceived is unknown; but movement was seen near Bacquart and fired on.

At 11.13 p.m. a party of the 30th Battalion, under Captain Krinks, covered by a barrage, attempted to raid the enemy north-east of Ferme de Mouquet, but found a belt of uncut wire. Telephone communication was maintained in No-Man's Land, and the party was ordered by the brigadier to return.

<sup>40</sup> Colonel H. G. Bennett of the 6th Battalion expressed the opinion that its rest of a fortnight in camp near Ypres was the most complete it had ever enjoyed.

<sup>41</sup> The King visited the 5th Division's area on August 14 and inspected its bombing school (see *Vol. XII*, plate 189).

**Raids, etc., covering the Somme offensive of September 15.**

The divisions of I Anzac at Ypres did not undertake any of the thirty-one raids arranged by Second Army to cover this offensive, but the following were undertaken by the 5th Division:

Sept. 15.<sup>42</sup>—A party of the 56th Battalion (14th Brigade) entered, after bombardment, the German trenches near Le Bridoux, but found them badly damaged and deserted. Two dead Germans were seen. Two Australians were wounded.

Sept. 16.<sup>43</sup>—A party of the 30th Battalion (8th Brigade) entered the German trenches near The Tadpole, drove the enemy back by bombing, and captured two men of the 20th Bavarian R.I.R. One Australian was killed and three were wounded; twelve German dead were counted.

Sept. 18.<sup>44</sup>—Shortly after midnight a party of the 58th Battalion (15th Brigade) entered the German trenches east of the Sugar-loaf, but found them empty. Lieutenant Gration<sup>45</sup> and four men were missing. (Some at least of the missing, including Gration, were killed.)

Sept. 20.—The same party of the 56th Battalion which had been disappointed by the result of its raid on Sept. 15 again raided the German line, this time without a previous bombardment, except one covering a "dummy" raid elsewhere. The right of the party was stopped by wire; the left, however, entered and bombed the enemy, who again fled before prisoners could be captured.

On the night of Sept. 19, at Ypres, Australian patrols captured three Germans.

**Raids, etc., covering the offensives of September 25 and 26 and of early October.**

Sept. 25.—A small party of the 16th Battalion (4th Division) attempted a "silent" raid upon the Germans near Oosthoek. The Germans were ready, manning their parapet, and the 16th did not succeeding in obtaining a prisoner.

Sept. 26.—A small party of the 15th Battalion (4th Division) attempted a "silent" raid on "No. 5" crater south of the Ypres-Comines Canal, but failed to get a prisoner.

Sept. 28.—Shortly after midnight a small party of the 13th Battalion (4th Division) entered the German line near "Piccadilly Farm," but slightly to the north of the point intended. The result was that a covering barrage which was then laid down fell on the left of the party, which suffered some loss, Lieutenant FitzPatrick<sup>46</sup> being killed. No prisoners were secured but a wounded Australian was captured by the enemy.

<sup>42</sup> One of fourteen raids carried out that night by the Second British Army.

<sup>43</sup> One of ten raids undertaken this night by Second Army, seven of them by the 4th Canadian Division.

<sup>44</sup> One of four raids by Second Army. The three others failed to enter the German lines.

<sup>45</sup> Lieut. H. V. G. Gration, 58th Bn. Cutter; of North Fitzroy, Vic.; b. Clifton Hill, Vic., 20 Feb., 1897. Killed in action, 18 Sept., 1916.

<sup>46</sup> Lieut. F. B. FitzPatrick, 13th Bn. Clerk; of Surry Hills, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 1884. Killed in action, 28<sup>th</sup> Sept., 1916.



Sept. 29.—Forty of the 18th Battalion (2nd Division) attempted at 2.30 a.m. a "silent"<sup>47</sup> raid south-east of "Sanctuary Wood." The raid had been previously delayed for a day or two, and the enemy appeared to be prepared; the approaching party was bombed from a forward post in the German wire, and the enterprise failed.

Sept. 30.—(Sixteen raids were undertaken this night on the Second Army front):—

At 10 p.m. an officer and fifty others of the 7th Battalion (1st Division) entered the German line north-east of "The Bluff," bombed the Germans who fought and resisted, and killed eight.

At the same hour a party of the 8th Battalion (1st Division) entered the German trenches north-east of The Bluff, crossing the wire-entanglement by means of mats. Dugouts were bombed, several Germans killed, and one badly wounded man captured. This prisoner was sent at once to a casualty clearing station, where he died and was buried without the regiment to which he belonged having been ascertained. Army Headquarters insisted on the body being at once exhumed, when an identity disc was found showing that the prisoner belonged to the 73rd Landwehr Regiment. The Australian losses in these two raids were one killed and three wounded.

Three officers and forty-six men of the 46th Battalion (4th Division), with an officer and twenty as a covering party, after artillery bombardment entered the German trenches at the Hollandschuur Farm Salient, south-east of Vierstraat. The Australian casualties were four slightly wounded. One wounded prisoner of the 127th Regiment was captured.

The 47th Battalion (4th Division) the same night was to make a "silent" raid south-west of St. Eloi. As, however, the wire had not been sufficiently cut, the operation was not carried out.

An Australian patrol this morning captured a man of the 74th Landwehr Regiment.

At 10 p.m. about sixty of the 55th Battalion (5th Division) entered the enemy's line at the same point (north of Bas Maisnil) where it had been raided on Sept. 20. In order to make more certain of capturing a prisoner, no bombardment was laid down before entry, but immediately afterwards a "box" barrage was thrown around the objective to prevent the enemy from escaping. Dugouts were bombed, in which sixteen or twenty Germans were killed; one prisoner was captured.

Oct. 1.—A patrol of the 4th Division attempted, without bombardment, to enter the enemy's trenches south of "Triangular Wood," but failed.

*Oct. 4.—After bombardment lasting an hour and a half, the Germans attempted about 7 p.m. to raid two neighbouring points on the front of the 16th Battalion (4th Division) east of St. Eloi. Each party appeared to be about fifty strong. One entered the trenches;*

<sup>47</sup> That is, without previous artillery bombardment. Generals Birdwood and White had at first questioned the wisdom of attempting "silent" raids, except when the enemy's position had been reconnoitred with especial care and his garrison had been proved to be unobservant. A week later, however, when it was found that the enemy was holding his front line only with outposts, "silent" raiding was encouraged.

*the other was caught by the Australian machine-guns when half-way across No-Man's Land, and driven back. Neither secured any prisoners. The Australian loss was 5 killed and 8 wounded.*

At midnight, after five minutes' bombardment, a party of the 19th Battalion (2nd Division) entered the German trenches south-east of "Observatory Ridge," but found only two Germans, both shattered by shells. The enemy had evidently withdrawn as soon as the bombardment began.

Oct. 6.—Three patrols of the 1st Battalion (1st Division) and one of the 2nd Battalion (1st Division) attempted silently to enter the German trenches north-east of The Bluff in order to ascertain which parts were garrisoned. One of the 1st Battalion patrols found its objective—a supposed strong-point—unoccupied. A second had just reached the enemy wire when bombs were thrown at it. The leading man (Private O'Brien<sup>48</sup>) and one mate at once rushed the trench and began bombing, the bombs from the enemy, who were unseen, falling all about them. After a sharp bomb-fight the party withdrew with both the leading men severely wounded. The third party of the 1st Battalion also met opposition. The party of the 2nd Battalion met an enemy patrol and could not get in.

This night Corporal Cherry<sup>49</sup> of the 2nd Battalion captured in No-Man's Land a man belonging to a patrol of the 414th (Württemberg) Regiment belonging to a new German division, the 204th.

A platoon of the 29th Battalion (5th Division, but temporarily detached to "Franks' Force") attempted to raid the "Chicken Run"; but the party was late in assembling, apparently ran into an enemy patrol, and was heavily bombed. The attempt failed, Lieutenant Stirling<sup>50</sup> and one man being wounded and missing and five others wounded. Stirling died of his wounds.

#### Raids covering the mid-October attacks.

On the night of Oct. 12 the divisions of the Second Army undertook sixteen raids, of which fourteen entered the enemy's trenches.

At 6.30 p.m. a party of the 2nd Battalion (1st Division) under Lieutenant Trott, and one of the 3rd Battalion (1st Division) under Lieutenant Burrett,<sup>51</sup> without previous artillery bombardment raided at two points north-east of The Bluff. The party of the 2nd Battalion was moving across No-Man's Land at 6.22 when an enemy flare rose and the men were seen. The Germans at once began to bomb; one of the Australians gave the word "skip"—the signal to retire—and part of the men rushed back to the sally-port. The covering party, however, under Lieutenant Laver,<sup>52</sup> was already lying along the

<sup>48</sup> Pte. H. O'Brien (No. 5752; 1st Bn.). Postal clerk; of Tumbarumba, N.S.W.; b. Tumbarumba, 11 April, 1897.

<sup>49</sup> Lieut. L. G. Cherry, M.M.; 2nd Bn. Carpenter; of Sydney; b. Ballarat, Vic., 1894.

<sup>50</sup> Lieut. F. M. Stirling, 29th Bn. Law student; of Bruthen, Vic.; b. Metung, Vic., 17 March, 1892. Died of wounds, 7 Oct., 1916.

<sup>51</sup> Lieut. C. L. L. Burrett, 3rd Bn. Bank clerk; of Sydney; b. Grenfell, N.S.W., 1894.

<sup>52</sup> Capt. A. Laver, M.C.; 2nd Bn. Station overseer; of Normanton, Q'land; b. Rocklea, Q'land. 1888.







65. INFANTRY OF THE 2ND AUSTRALIAN DIVISION RESTING ON THE ROADSIDE NEAR FRICOURT,  
WINTER OF 1916

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. E2118.*

*To face p. 885.*



enemy's wire. Lieutenant Trott accordingly went forward and found Laver. Being determined to carry the operation through, Trott—with his officers, Lieutenants Laver, Yeats,<sup>53</sup> and de Winton,<sup>54</sup> and three N.C.O's—gathered part of the men, and, at 6.30, when the artillery laid down its "box" barrage crossed the wire on mats. He forced his way into the German trench, fighting hard. Two prisoners were captured and brought back, but when the rest of the party had returned it was found that some of the wounded were missing. Corporal McColl<sup>55</sup> and Private Cameron<sup>56</sup> accordingly went back and brought in several of them, but Lieutenant de Winton, who had been seen returning wounded across No-Man's Land, was still absent. He was searched for the following night in No-Man's Land by a patrol of the 4th Battalion under Lieutenant Watson<sup>57</sup> of the 2nd. On the third night his dead body was found there by the 15th Battalion, and, on the fourth, was brought in. The 2nd Battalion killed seven Germans, and lost one officer and one other killed, and seven wounded.

The 3rd Battalion's party also got in, meeting with strong opposition, but secured no prisoners.

Three officers and sixty-nine others of the 28th Battalion (2nd Division) at 6.30 p.m., after bombardment, entered a T-head sap and part of the German front line south-east of Sanctuary Wood. The engineers accompanying the party blew up a dugout. Fourteen Germans were thought to have been killed. The raiders had two men slightly wounded, and five others were wounded by the German artillery retaliation, which was severe.

At the same hour a party of the 49th Battalion (4th Division) attempted a raid near Piccadilly Farm. Through the difficulty of getting into position in twilight—a difficulty increased by the German flares—only nine men were in position when the barrage fell. The officer commanding the raid thereupon ordered the party's withdrawal. The Australian loss was two killed and three wounded.

Two officers and sixty others of the 54th Battalion (5th Division) after five minutes' bombardment entered the German trenches north of Bas Maisnil. Twenty-one dead Germans were seen, but none living. No identification was made. The Australians lost five wounded.

A party, about sixty strong, of the 59th Battalion (5th Division) entered the German trenches east of the Sugar-loaf. In order to prevent the enemy from withdrawing, the previous bombardment was limited to three minutes, but the trenches were found empty, and no identification was secured. The Australian loss was three slightly wounded.

Another party of the 59th Battalion crossed the wide No-Man's Land at the Sugar-loaf, intending to bring back a German machine-gun which had been active there. The raid, which was a "silent" one, failed, the Germans being prepared. The Australians lost one killed and five wounded.

<sup>53</sup> Lieut. W. Yeats, 2nd Bn. Customs officer; of Sydney; b. Peterhead, Scotland, 14 Dec., 1888. Killed in action, 4 May, 1917.

<sup>54</sup> Lieut. C. P. de Winton, 2nd Bn. Pastoralist; of Toowong, Q'land; b. Toowong, 9 July, 1881. Died of wounds, 12 Oct., 1916.

<sup>55</sup> Warrant Officer T. H. McColl, D.C.M., M.M.; 2nd Bn. Labourer; of Sydney; b. Half Morton, Dumfries, Scotland, 1887.

<sup>56</sup> Pte. A. Cameron (No. 4019; 2nd Bn.). Farmer; of Dubbo, N.S.W.; b. St. Arnaud, Vic., 1880. Killed in action, 4 Oct., 1917.

<sup>57</sup> Major H. F. Watson, D.S.O., M.C.; 2nd Bn. Brigade Major, 2nd Inf. Bde., 1917/18. Grazier; of Longreach, Q'land; b. Woollahra, N.S.W., 2 Feb., 1881.

The same night at 7.30 p.m. five officers and 100 men of the 31st Battalion (of the 5th Division, but then attached to Franks' Force), after thirteen minutes' preliminary bombardment, entered the Chicken Run, and stayed in the German line for forty minutes, entirely clearing the sector. Dugouts were bombed, first with smoke-bombs and then with Stokes mortar bombs. Three prisoners of the 9th Bavarian I.R. (4th Bav. Division) were brought back. The 31st lost only one man killed and seven wounded.

On Oct. 14 at 6.30 p.m., after six minutes' bombardment, a party of the 27th Battalion (2nd Division) attempted to raid east of "Armagh Wood." The raid, however, was a postponed one, and the enemy had been put on the alert by the wire-cutting bombardments, and appeared to have repaired the gap. Lieutenant Forwood,<sup>58</sup> scout officer of the 27th, was wounded by a bomb thrown from the German trench. The attempt failed—Australian loss, one killed, three wounded.

Two officers and forty others of the 45th Battalion (4th Division) entered the enemy's front trench at the Bois Quarante and searched it for fifty yards without finding an opponent. Four Australians were wounded.

*On Oct. 16 at 6.40, after nearly an hour-and-a-half's bombardment largely with "rum jars," the Germans attempted to raid the 48th Battalion (4th Division) at "Poppy Lane." About 100 yards of trench were demolished, but the troops withdrew to the flanks, and only two were killed and six wounded. The Germans, though met with Lewis gun and rifle fire, succeeded in throwing bombs into the trench, but appear to have secured no prisoner.*

It is doubtful whether the enemy discovered the presence of the Australians at Ypres until the night of September 28th, when a severely wounded man of the 2nd Australian Division was left in the lines of the 360th R.I.R. By September 30th the Germans knew of the presence of the 4th Division also, but not of that of the 1st. Probably lack of ammunition prevented them from initiating many raids; those undertaken were, as usual, preceded by bombardments which lasted much longer than those of the British, but which failed to inflict on the Australians casualties comparable to those suffered in enemy raids in May at Armentières.<sup>59</sup> This result was mainly due to the fact that the method of lightly holding the front line was at last in practice. For the sector south of Armentières the standing order now was that the front line was not to be occupied by more than 200 men to every 1,000 yards,<sup>60</sup> these troops being distributed in

<sup>58</sup> Lieut. R. E. Forwood, 27th Bn. Engineer; of Adelaide; b. Mile End, S. Aust., 13 July, 1885. Died on 20 Nov., 1916, of wounds received three days previously.

<sup>59</sup> Over 100, in the 20th Battalion on May 5, and the 11th Battalion on May 30. Also in the 58th on July 15-16 (*see pp. 203, 212, and 345*).

<sup>60</sup> The number was varied. Before the relief of the 5th Division it was reduced to 150 men per 1,000 yards.

strong-points, while empty "trenches" between were merely patrolled. The bulk of the forward garrison—consisting of at least 400 men per 1,000 yards—was retained in the "300 yards line," where concrete shelters were being prepared for its occupation.<sup>61</sup> Somewhat similar measures were in force in the Ypres sector, the front line being occupied—as the Germans had long held theirs—by a series of posts. The urgency of these measures was emphasised when on September 15th and October 5th the Commander-in-Chief, constantly requiring more divisions for the Somme offensive, asked the First and Second Armies to hold their fronts still more lightly.

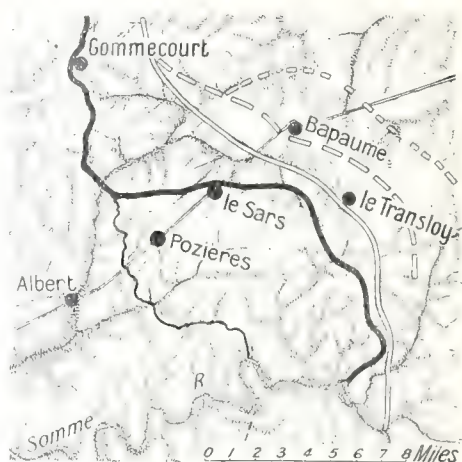
The offensive of September 15th on the Somme had, like its predecessors, failed to break through; but by October 7th the head of the advance had penetrated beyond all except the last of those defence-lines which had been complete at its commencement. It is true that by then three more lines existed—the first through Le Transloy and along the slope of the Bapaume heights; the second, half-complete, on the crest of those heights; and the third, less complete, three miles beyond. But Haig believed that the Germans were suffering heavier loss than the British,<sup>62</sup> and, though they still fought well, there were signs that their spirit—at least in the Somme area—was deteriorating. The entry of Roumania (August 27th) on the side of the Allies, and the gradual realisation that the Verdun offensive had failed, increased this depression, and had caused Falkenhayn to be superseded on August 29th by Hindenburg and Ludendorff. In these circumstances Haig's policy was definite:

There can be no question (he wrote on October 7) as to the right course to follow. Our offensive must be continued without intermission as long as possible.

<sup>61</sup> See p. 111. Farther back a series of deep dugouts was also being made in the clay. The construction of this form of shelter was afterwards abandoned in the Armentières district, the trouble of excluding water being too great to be worth while. The old support line (or "75 yards line"—see p. 110) also was abandoned, but fires were lighted there so as to draw the enemy shelling upon it, and for the same purpose General M'Cay ordered that the damage done to it should be daily repaired—a branch of "active" camouflage (*i.e.*, deception intended to make the enemy take useless action, as opposed to camouflage intended to prevent him from taking effective action) which might with benefit have been much more regularly practised.

<sup>62</sup> Haig's intelligence staff estimated the German loss on the Somme by the beginning of October to be at least 370,000. This was probably not far wrong, but represented the loss inflicted by the British and the French. See end of chap. xxv.

He therefore planned another great attack by the Third, Reserve, and Fourth Armies on a front extending from Gommecourt to Le Transloy. The early tanks having proved slow, destructible, and liable to break down, the army had still to rely on the old methods of attack.<sup>63</sup> There was a chance that in mid-October—the time for the intended offensive—the weather might still be fine. But Haig was determined to maintain this attack, even in the wet.



*Front lines on Oct. 7 are shown in heavy black. German 2nd, 3rd, and 4th lines in white.*

Bad weather (he wrote to Sir William Robertson in London) adds much to the difficulty of offensive operations, and delays them considerably, but an ordinary winter in this climate should not suffice to put a stop to my advance, provided all the means required to enable me to cope with it can be provided . . . There are fair grounds for hope that very far-reaching success, affording full compensation for all that has been done to attain it, may be gained in the near future by a vigorous maintenance of our offensive . . .

The success which the Commander-in-Chief had in mind could only be a penetration of the enemy's line enabling him to roll-up at least a portion of it. Subsidiary offensives at Viny Ridge and Messines were still in prospect as a means of enlarging this success. The fighting—and the projected fighting—on the Somme were gradually calling upon those divisions which (as the Germans put it) had already been once called upon to go through that "blood-bath." It was the recall of the 4th British Division (which they themselves helped to relieve) that first gave the Australian soldiers a

<sup>63</sup> Lord Cavan, commanding the XIV Corps (including the Guards Division), reported on Sept. 30: "Under no circumstances should any important plan for major or minor operations be based upon or rely on the arrival or effective action of the tanks. I own that hitherto my corps has been singularly unfortunate in their use."



hint that their turn would soon come. Early in October they saw the 29th Division (old comrades of Gallipoli who had been on their left at Ypres) also sent southwards. Nevertheless it was a bitter shock when it became known that on October 9th orders had been received for the divisions of I Anzac to go back at once to the Somme. This time the 5th Division from II Anzac was to join them. An order to Second Army on October 10th ran:

1st Aust. Div. or 5th Aust. Div. will be transferred by rail to Fourth Army about 16th October . . . The formation [*i.e.*, the division] selected should be the one most fitted for offensive operations.

Plumer the same day selected the 5th Division. The 1st, 2nd, and 4th Australian Divisions and the 7th British were directed to follow in that order.<sup>64</sup> At the same time the First Army had received the order:

Withdraw 32nd, 40th, 37th, 60th (in order of efficiency for battle), to be replaced by Canadian Corps.

Although in divisional orders the reason for the withdrawal was said to be "training" near St. Omer, the conviction of the Australians—not far mistaken—was that they were being sent to the Somme to take Bapaume. For the first time there arose a widespread feeling that the English command was asking more of the Australian troops than of its own; and indirectly this was the effect, though certainly not the intention, of the policy adopted. Undoubtedly the British authorities, from considerations of honour, would have preferred that British troops should be sacrificed rather than those of the dominions, but fortunately it was not necessary within the British Empire to make such considerations the basis of decision. The guiding principle, and the only rational or practicable one, was simply to employ those divisions which were fittest for the tasks in hand. As General Kiggell, Haig's chief-of-staff, told Keith Murdoch at this juncture (to quote from a well-informed diary):

There were certain divisions on which they looked as divisions which, if they gave them a thing to do, would do it. *All* the Australian divisions were in that category.

<sup>64</sup> The 7th would have been sent after the 1st Australian but for the advisability of keeping the I Anzac Corps together.

The whole of Haig's force was in this respect treated as one entity, and the Australian divisions were employed in precisely the same way as those British divisions which had earned the same honourable classification.

But there could be no question that the second move to the Somme was highly unpopular. While some units felt it more than others, few of them came out of the line at Ypres with their usual spirits.

I saw the 11th, 9th, and 12th all marching through Abeele streets (wrote an onlooker on October 12). The men all looked very serious—sturdy and solid, but not the least buoyancy about them. The 12th (Tasmania) were the liveliest, singing a little.

It was at this juncture, on their way from Ypres and Armentières to the Somme,<sup>65</sup> that the Australian troops were called on to vote upon the referendum concerning conscription. The date for the poll in Australia was to be October 28th, and—probably in the hope that they would give a lead to Australia—the soldiers at the front were to vote earlier. Shortly before the poll, however, Keith Murdoch was impressed with strong doubts whether the vote at the front would favour conscription. As one of the chief grounds of appeal in Australia was the supposed call from the troops at the front for reinforcements, an adverse vote in France would gravely imperil the chance of securing a favourable vote in Australia. Urged by this consideration, the Australian Prime Minister at the last moment cabled to Birdwood—who, like most other officers, had rigidly refrained from any attempt to influence his men concerning the issue—imploping him to put aside precedent and to use his great influence with the troops in order to induce them to carry conscription by a large majority, and thus give a lead to the people.

Voting in France was to begin on Monday, October 16th; and this message only reached Birdwood (who was in London on short leave) on Sunday night. He had already been personally asked by Keith Murdoch and by Lloyd George to

<sup>65</sup> The 5th Division was withdrawn from the line south of Armentières on Oct. 13, upon the return of the New Zealand Division from the Somme. The 1st, 2nd, and 4th Divisions were withdrawn from the Ypres front on Oct. 14, 20, and 24 respectively. On the 24th the I Anzac Corps staff was relieved at Abeele by that of the X Corps, and moved to Villers Bocage in Picardy.

send a cable to the Australian people, but had refused.<sup>66</sup> The appeal from the Australian Prime Minister, however, was couched in terms which no patriot could easily resist. Birdwood at once dictated a message asking the troops to vote according to their consciences, but telling them of the considerations, perhaps better known to him than to them, which rendered urgent the need for reinforcements.<sup>67</sup> As A.I.F. Headquarters in London stated that it could not get this message to France that night, Birdwood ordered the poll to be postponed for several days. This order arrived after the polling in some units had actually begun, and voting was accordingly broken off.

The Australian soldier was, like most others, resentful of any attempt by his officers to interfere with his free judgment as a citizen, and the experiment was therefore dangerous. Probably it turned few voters either way, but the early polls foreshadowed a ten per cent majority against conscription. As soon as this became apparent, several prominent Australians then in England,<sup>68</sup> were, through the activity of Keith Murdoch, allowed by Sir Douglas Haig to visit France and address part of the troops—the officers, by Haig's insistence, being absent—with the object of securing at least a resolution asking the Australian people to send reinforcements. The Agent-General for South Australia, Frederick William Young, ably addressed part of the 6th Brigade, explaining frankly the object of the meeting, and relying largely upon the argument that Australia at present stood first among the dominions in the eyes of the British nation,<sup>69</sup> and that, if she did not adopt conscription as the British had done, she would lose that regard. The attitude of the troops, however, was quite clear: they did not care whether Australia came first in the opinion of Great Britain or not—they desired that a sufficient number of Australians should be left after the war to develop their empty country in

<sup>66</sup> He pointed out that he might be misrepresented in Australia as giving an order to his men. Lloyd George agreed with this view when put to him.

<sup>67</sup> The message also referred to the Government's assurance that brothers left at home to keep up the family business would be exempted, and to the need of making the "shirker" serve instead of securing the best positions in Australia.

<sup>68</sup> Including O. C. Beale, of Sydney, and F. W. Young, Agent-General for South Australia.

<sup>69</sup> This was probably his own belief, but was not necessarily correct.

accordance with the present character of their nation. Australia, they held, was already "doing enough". Some were strongly averse to the prospect of having in their regiments men who had avoided voluntary enlistment. Others feared that conscription would mean the introduction of the hated death penalty. Others again would vote as members of the Labour Party, of which the main wing opposed conscription. The common argument that it would provide rest for their overworked units did not impress them, for they well knew that replenished units were likely to be constantly sent into battle, and weaker ones rested. But beyond question the most general motive among the soldiers for opposing conscription was one not without nobility. They themselves, when they enlisted, had not known the trials and horrors of war; and, now that they did know, they would not, by their votes, force any other man into those trials against his will.

It was perhaps characteristic of the Australian that, at the public meeting addressed by Young, the opposition to the wishes of authority was made to appear stronger than it really was. As a matter of fact the more responsible part of the force, including practically all the officers, most of the N.C.O.'s, and at least half of the men, was in favour of conscription. But the hope of securing the desired resolutions vanished. The polling, which had begun on October 16th as the units reached villages behind the line,<sup>70</sup> was quickly completed. The vote of the A.I.F. was found to be in favour of conscription, but only by 72,399 against 58,894; and it was understood that it was the men on transports and in camp, rather than those actually at the front, who were responsible for the excess of the "Yes" vote. The total vote of the nation went, by a slight majority, against conscription—a cause of deep mortification to those Australians who felt that this war could only be fought by "all-in" methods, that is, by each ally unreservedly throwing his whole weight into the struggle. The immediate result was that the Australian Prime Minister was forced to telegraph that the special reinforcement of 20,000 and the large monthly reinforcements which

<sup>70</sup> The procedure was by ballot, and was similar to that of an ordinary election. The commander of each unit arranged its polling place, and he with his staff conducted the operation under guidance from Colonel Anderson in London. The 1st Division voted at Bayenghem, Ganspette, La Paune, Serques, Bleue Maison; the 2nd at Steenvoorde, Busseboom; and so on.



had been promised (and which, according to the Army Council's telegram of August 24th, alone could save the 3rd Division from being broken up) could not now be provided. He suggested that the 3rd Division should for the present be retained in England, Australia endeavouring to provide the normal reinforcement for the other four.

But the thunderbolt foreshadowed in the Army Council's telegram concerning the 3rd Division did not fall. On the contrary, General Plumer in France had been allowed to count on that division to strengthen the II Anzac Corps, which was unduly weak. The reply to Hughes was:

As already arranged the 3rd Division must proceed to France on the 21st November. It would seriously interfere with plans in progress to cancel this decision. The Army Council therefore urge that, even if it be not feasible to provide the whole or part of 20,000 special draft, no effort be spared to maintain adequate reinforcements for five divisions.

Thus the War Office is found advocating a large number of divisions even if full reinforcements were difficult to maintain—a change of policy which, remarkable in itself,<sup>71</sup> was shortly to become even more pronounced.

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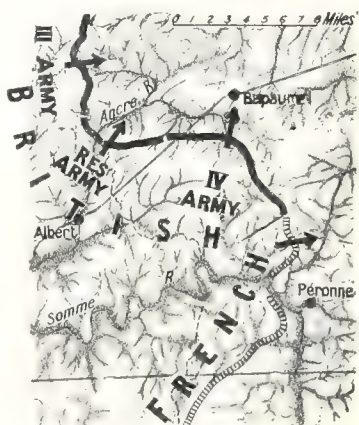
<sup>71</sup> See pp. 156 and 864; and Vol. II, p. 419.

## CHAPTER XXV

### FLERS. THE SOMME BATTLE ENDS

THE Australian divisions, almost restored by their rest at Ypres, were now to plunge into the hardest trial that ever came to them. Haig's policy was to break the Germans as a man might break a rope—by keeping it strained under a wearing tension and from time to time striking heavily to discover whether it would yet snap. When the Australian divisions were ordered back to the Somme, the intention was to deliver the next blow on October 14th: the Fourth Army, whose line then lay near the bottom of the valley before Bapaume, would strike across the valley towards positions a mile and a half distant on its opposite slope and head.<sup>1</sup> Two days later the Reserve and Third Armies, carrying out in a modified form Haig's original plan of the Somme offensive,<sup>2</sup> would attack on the left of the Fourth.<sup>3</sup>

But incidents were already occurring which warned the British commander that, although "an ordinary winter" might not suffice to stop his advance, the coming winter would do so. When the Fourth Army on October 7th had attempted one of the preparatory stages of its task,<sup>4</sup> the barrage, falling in the wet ground, proved strangely ineffective. High-explosive shells pierced deep into the earth before bursting, throwing up steam and smoke and a few clods of earth instead of the churned-up dust-cloud which in summer advances had so



<sup>1</sup> This attack had been planned on Sept. 29 to be carried out in three stages: (1) Oct. 1—capture of Eaucourt l'Abbaye and southern outskirts of Le Sars; (2) capture of Le Sars, the Butte of Warlencourt, and lower slopes of the valley in front of Gueudecourt; (3) capture of Pys, and a line beyond Warlencourt and Thillois on the far side of the valley as far as Le Transloy (on a spur at the head of the valley). Of these stages, the first had been accomplished on Oct. 1-3; the weather then broke, but the second stage was attempted on Oct. 7, with success only at Le Sars. (See Vol. XII, plates 276, 289, 290.)

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 235-7.

<sup>3</sup> Their objectives were Loupart Wood, Irlles, Serre, and Gommecourt.

<sup>4</sup> The capture of Le Sars, the Butte, and the valley in front of Gueudecourt.

perfectly screened the advancing infantry. German machine-guns, now specially posted from 400 to 600 yards beyond, fired with impunity through the barrage on the clearly visible troops. Near Flers the attack had also come up against a German division which fought with remarkable confidence—that same 6th Bavarian Reserve Division which had faced the British and Australians at Fromelles. The morale of the Germans did not in all cases deteriorate, nor did that of the British, under these conditions, always maintain its high level. Desertion by British soldiers to the enemy was (as is admitted in many German records) remarkably rare; but before the battle of October 7th a British deserter had informed the enemy of its imminence.

The Fourth Army's attempt, repeated in certain phases on the 8th and 12th, failed almost totally on both occasions; and though the Sixth French Army on his flank reached the edge of Sailly-Saillisel, on the same ridge as Bapaume, Haig appears by October 12th to have become convinced—with good reason—that the German line could not be pierced that year. It is true that Joffre, apparently in a desperate effort to secure results which would reconcile the French people to the strategy of the Somme, urged him to continue attacking on a wide front; and Foch, who had not yet abandoned his intention of thrusting on the heights, pressed Haig to assist the French left by launching the British right against Le Transloy. In reply Haig assured Joffre that his main plans had not been changed. As a matter of fact he was determined to keep up strong pressure during the winter, so as to break through in the spring; and, partly for these objects, partly to obtain a better position for wintering, the Fourth Army's attack against the bottom and opposite slope of the valley was still to be delivered. But the participation of the Third Army in the projected offensive was cancelled.<sup>5</sup> Its tanks and some of its artillery were transferred to the Reserve Army, which, being in a favourable position to pinch the enemy's salient north of Thiepval, was still to attack on both sides of the Ancre, though with less extensive objectives than those originally planned. The rôle of the Reserve Army

<sup>5</sup> At the time when this step was taken, the Third Army's reserves had already begun to move into their battle positions.

was now not to widen a breach made by the Fourth Army, but to inflict loss upon the enemy; and, as the Fourth Army's offensive was continually postponed in consequence of the boggy condition of its area, the Reserve Army was on October 14th ordered to attack independently, as soon as was convenient to itself. The part to be played by Gough's force having thus been altered, its name was changed on October 30th to "Fifth Army."

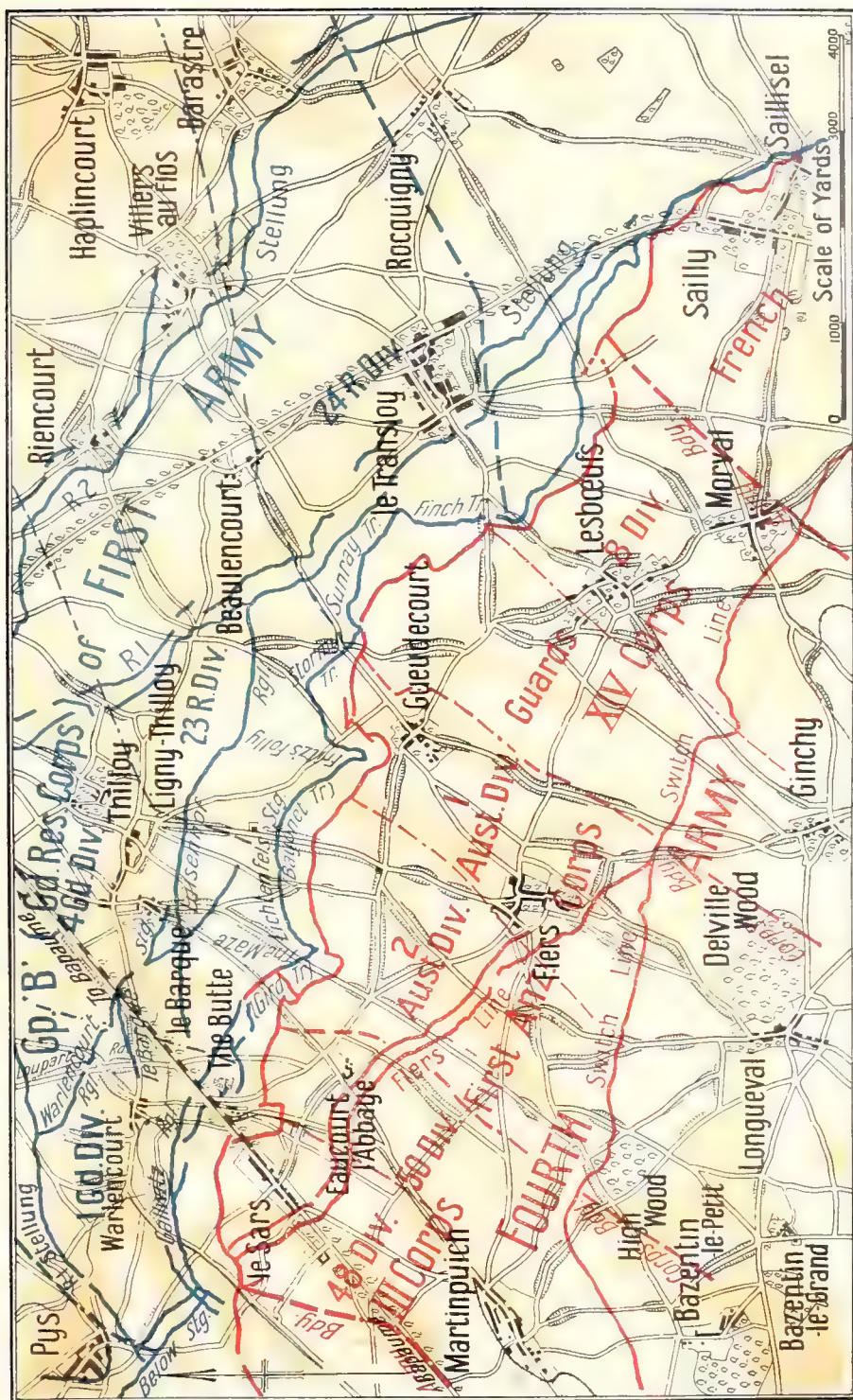
Thus from October 12th, except for certain limited attacks to be undertaken, Haig's immediate intention was that his two armies on the Somme should go into winter quarters. For winter fighting and training, both of them were to be organised in a number of quasi-permanent army corps, each of four divisions. Of the divisions in each corps, two would hold the line and attack when feasible, one, billeted in villages just clear of the battlefield, would lie in reserve training and working, and the fourth would train in a back area. The I Anzac Corps (now of four divisions) would take the place of the XV, the central army corps of the Fourth Army, which would be sent back to a training area.

When on October 18th the 5th Australian Division reached Ailly-le-Haut-Clocher, in the Fourth Army's back area, that army was still confronted with its task of reaching, in two stages, the proposed winter line on the other side of the valley and—on its extreme right—assisting the French near Le Transloy. That very morning an attempt, made in the dark and rain by its front-line divisions to complete a preparatory stage, again failed almost totally. As the Reserve Army's attack was fixed for the 23rd, it was now arranged that the Fourth Army would repeat its attempt that day; any objective not gained would be taken on the 26th, when the French also would operate; on the 29th would be launched the advance up the far side of the valley.<sup>6</sup> The 29th Division and part of the 5th Australian—both from Ypres—would be in time to take part in the first of these operations.

Rumours had reached the Australians of great hardships suffered during the recent bad-weather offensives. Some officers of the Corps, visiting the Somme area, had watched a British battalion after relief dragging itself, covered with

<sup>6</sup> To Thillois and Loupart Wood, the task of reaching which had now been taken over by the Fourth Army from the Reserve Army.





THE I ANZAC CORPS SECTOR OF THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD ON 5TH NOVEMBER, 1916



mud, along the road at a snail's pace, with hardly a semblance of formation, and had been inclined mentally to censure its officers for not pulling their troops together. This critical attitude changed after a sight of the battlefield from which those men had emerged. The continuous pressing of the attack had made it impossible to devote adequate labour or even thought to precautions against rainy conditions, and consequently, when the weather broke, the Fourth Army had found itself with seven miles of unorganised crater-field behind its front-line troops. This area had been churned by the advancing battle into wild moorland, bare of dwellings, trees, or hedges, flayed in most parts even of grass, and its drainage almost everywhere blocked by innumerable craters. So long as dry weather held, the trenches which veined this brown wilderness were passable and habitable without revetment, flooring, or drainage, and a few miles behind the lines troops, waggons, and motor-lorries could make their way across country wherever desired. But a light rain converted the trenches to mere muddy ditches, and rendered the cross-country tracks distressingly heavy for men and horses and impassable by wheeled traffic. For the autumn offensive there had been crowded into this area not only troops in great density and depth, but a much greater force of heavy artillery than had opened the battle there in July. As transport became slower and more difficult, the supply of ammunition for the preparatory bombardments taxed the automobile transport almost beyond its capacity. All thought of pushing forward engineering material to floor orrevet the trenches had to be temporarily abandoned, the transport being barely able to feed and munition the troops. Although railways—both broad and narrow gauge—were being gradually pushed forward to several points close behind the "Second Line" Ridge, the railheads for delivery of supplies were still away back near Albert, and an endless procession of food, ammunition, and ambulance lorries daily churned its slow way along the few country roads leading thence to dépôts close in rear of the Second Line Ridge.<sup>7</sup> The front line lay two miles down the forward slope of that ridge, and, to carry food and ammunition across the muddy fields,<sup>8</sup> the regimental transport, encamped behind the Second Line Ridge

<sup>7</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 262.

<sup>8</sup> These were largely old turnip fields.

(where its lines were soon trampled into mud almost to the horses' bellies),<sup>9</sup> had mostly been organised into pack trains. The field artillery, crowded into positions of dreadful morass in the only available depressions on the forward slope,<sup>10</sup> received its shells by pack-horses. The carriage of wounded was by five or six relay-posts of stretcher-bearers,<sup>11</sup> who bivouacked at intervals down the slope. Their task was lightened shortly after the arrival of the Australians by the improvisation of wooden sledges for the wounded, who were then dragged by one or two horses across the mud.<sup>12</sup> For troops forward of the Second Line Ridge no roofed cover existed except here and there a German dugout, used as company or battalion headquarters or regimental aid-post. For units in rear—which in the summer had bivouacked in old trenches—hardly any shelter had been provided, and, the villages having been destroyed, no houses existed nearer than Albert.

By October 20th the supply of ammunition to the heavy artillery was becoming so disorganised that General Rawlinson took special measures to hurry forward the railway. To crown all, within the next few days the few country roads which now carried the whole supply for the front began to give way.<sup>13</sup> It was at this juncture that the Australians began to reach the battlefield. The first stage of each brigade's journey was the easiest Australian infantry had experienced, one brigade being picked up daily west of Amiens by motor-charabancs of the French Army, and carried to the villages of Buire, Ribemont, or Dernancourt, south-west of Albert. The journey, which usually occupied

<sup>9</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 263.

<sup>10</sup> The best known to the Australians was "Gun Valley" (see *Vol. XII*, plate 274). Some of the New Zealand guns were so deeply embedded that they could not be dug out until long after the Australian artillery took over.

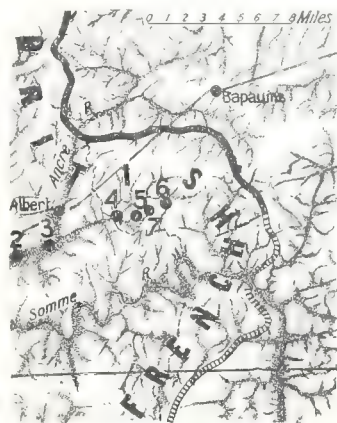
<sup>11</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 279.

<sup>12</sup> This method was suggested by a warrant officer of the 8th Field Ambulance, A. E. Roberts, who, as a farmer at Warragul, Victoria, had used such a sleigh. The suggestion was taken up by Captain H. A. C. Irving (of Glenthompson and Melbourne, Vic.) of the same ambulance and brought to the notice of Colonel Manifold, D.D.M.S. of I. Anzac Corps, who spent the night of Oct. 28 in the forward area. The "carry" was thus reduced from 7 hours to 1½ hours. By the end of October 20 sledges had been made; but horses, though promised, were difficult to obtain, owing to the strain on transport and the sickness of the animals.

<sup>13</sup> The railway trains serving the front were provided by the French. They were insufficient to furnish all the ammunition and road-material required; and the Fourth Army, when this dilemma arose, appears to have expressed a wish for the ammunition to be brought up even if the roads had to be sacrificed. On Nov. 23 the roads and railways in the region of the British Army (except those in the front area) were taken over by a civilian organisation under Sir Eric Geddes, the Director-General of Transportation. The benefits of that reform were not visible during the continuance of this particular difficulty at the front.



a morning, gave almost childish pleasure, and its management by the French staff was universally praised—but the pleasure ended there. The battalions were either billeted in the overcrowded, verminous, leaky barns of Buire, Ribemont, and Dernancourt, or forthwith marched on through dense traffic eight or ten miles farther to the “staging camps” on the old battlefield, from which they could be moved within twelve hours to the front line. In the XV Corps area these “camps” lay about Fricourt, Mametz, and Montauban—once villages, but now marked only by some of their still visible foundations, and, in the case of Montauban, by part of the iron-work gate of the churchyard and a Madonna and Child standing in the ruins.



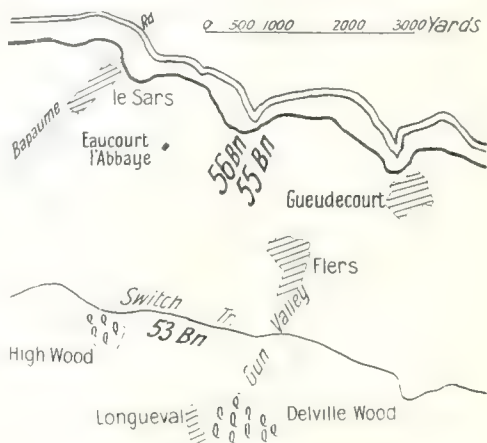
1. Ribemont; 2. Buire; 3. Dernancourt; 4. Fricourt;
5. Mametz; 6. Montauban;
7. Pommiers Redoubt.

Thus the leading brigade, the 14th, of the 5th Division, after marching ten miles in the morning to meet its charabancs (which actually passed it on the road), and worming its way on foot through traffic for another ten miles in the afternoon, turned off the crowded road at dusk into the muddy plateau known as “Pommiers Camp,”<sup>14</sup> near Montauban. Here, as no cover was available for three-quarters of the men, the majority slept in the open, improvising what shelter they could with their blankets and water-proof sheets. Little rain had fallen since the previous day, but there was a heavy frost and the ground was wet. As the brigade was required for the next attack, it moved on next day to take over the front, and, leaving blankets<sup>15</sup> and packs, but picking up shovels, two bombs per man, and extra ammunition, marched during daylight past the dreadful

<sup>14</sup> At “Pommiers Redoubt,” an old German work near some apple trees—whence the name.

<sup>15</sup> Australian brigades which entered the line at later dates carried to the trenches one blanket and one water-proof sheet per man.

wreckage of Delville Wood<sup>16</sup> and over the crest of the Second Line Ridge, and thence down the long even slope to the valley. The lower knuckles of that slope and the whole of the farther side—still fairly green—were within the enemy's lines; the day was fine, and the whole landscape up to the distant clock-tower of Bapaume, which rose over a copse crowning the opposite height, was in clear view. Two long communication trenches led down past the muddy positions in "Gun Valley" and the ruined village of Flers;<sup>17</sup> but the mud in these saps was in many places knee-deep, and most of the infantry had to make its way in the open beside them.<sup>18</sup> After passing Flers the Australians saw their first tanks, derelicts of the September fighting, in some cases with the crew still lying dead among the machinery. Before midnight the 55th and 56th Battalions had taken over from the troops of the 12th Division the front and support lines, and the 53rd the old German "Switch Trench,"<sup>19</sup> two miles back on the summit of the Second Line Ridge.<sup>20</sup> Although the distance from Pommiers Camp to the front line was only six miles, the relief had taken from nine to twelve hours, and the front-line battalions were worn



out before they arrived. The night (October 21st) was dry but bitterly cold, and the men could warm themselves only by digging the mud from their trenches and cutting fire-steps. By next day the two front-line battalions—which were detailed for the approaching attack—were so exhausted that it was decided to relieve them immediately by the 53rd and bring them back for a short rest in Pommiers Camp, which had then been improved by the addition of a few

<sup>16</sup> See note on p. 869.

<sup>17</sup> See Vol. XII, plates 264-6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., plate 272.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., plate 273.

<sup>20</sup> The 54th and one company of the 55th remained as brigade reserve in Pommiers Camp.

tents. The same night the 8th Brigade under similar difficulties took over the sector south-west of the 14th, immediately north of the ruins of Gueudecourt.<sup>21</sup> Both brigades were greatly impressed by the continuity of the artillery-fire; on the British side each division was now supported by more than two divisional artilleries, and the normal fire of the British heavy batteries had enormously increased.<sup>22</sup> The fire of the German artillery, however, did not approach that which had been normal at Pozières. Where the British shells flew over in sheaves, the Germans fired single shots or salvoes, which usually left the foremost troops undisturbed and burst about the supports.<sup>23</sup> In the muddy ruins of Gueudecourt, close behind the Australian right, a German 5.9-inch shell burst regularly—according to one account, at the rate of one a minute—night and day, throughout the winter, the enemy's object (in which he succeeded) being to prevent the use of cellars or dugouts in the village. Flers, a little farther back behind the left, was constantly, but not so regularly, shelled, and, although some units reported the place as too dangerous for occupation, its cellars were during the winter used by the infantry for headquarters and sometimes for the accommodation of local reserves.

<sup>21</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plates 267-8.

<sup>22</sup> The 5th Australian Division temporarily left its own artillery near Armentières. When the division took over the sector beyond Flers, it was covered by the artillery of the 12th and New Zealand Divisions, one artillery brigade of the 29th Division, and two batteries of Royal Horse Artillery. The artillery of the 1st Australian Division shortly afterwards relieved the New Zealanders. The infantry of the 1st Australian Division, on coming into the line near Gueudecourt, was covered by the artilleries of the 30th and 41st British Divisions and two artillery brigades of the 29th Division; but on Nov. 1 the artillery of the 2nd Australian Division relieved that of the 41st. The supporting field artillery was then as follows:

*5th Aust. Division's Sector.*  
12th Div. Artillery.  
1st Aust. Div. Artillery.  
One Bde., 29th Div. Artillery.  
Two batteries, R.H.A.

*1st Aust. Division's Sector.*  
30th Div. Artillery.  
2nd Aust. Div. Artillery.  
Two Bdes., 29th Div. Artillery.

Each group was subdivided into two smaller groups covering the right and left brigades of each division respectively.

The heavy artillery allotted to the I Anzac Corps included on Oct. 30 the following groups of batteries of heavy artillery: 3rd, 14th, 21st, and 69th—heavy howitzers for bombardment; 23rd (batteries of 4.7-inch, 6-inch, and 12-inch guns) for counter-battery work; and 18th and 62nd (60-pounders). Altogether Brigadier-General L. D. Fraser (commanding the Corps heavy artillery) now controlled no less than 87 heavy guns or howitzers.

<sup>23</sup> The roads and cross-roads close behind the front line were for this reason dangerous, especially "Factory Corner," north of Flers. Here Lieut. E. Springfield (of Daylesford, Vic.) of the 31st Battalion was killed almost as soon as the 5th Division arrived.

The 5th Division had entered the line under the XV Corps (Lieutenant-General Du Cane),<sup>24</sup> which had issued to General M'Cay orders for the attack intended on the 25th; but on the 23rd rain fell. On that day the XIV Corps, on the right of the XV, attacked to assist the French, but suffered 2,000 casualties with little gain. As the rain continued, the projected offensive in front of Bapaume was postponed from day to day, and by October 30th, when the I Anzac Corps took over from the XV, it had been fixed for November 1st. The 55th and 56th Battalions were therefore on the 30th sent back to the front line. The brigadier, General Hobkirk,<sup>25</sup> visiting the front line that day, noted:

Men very cheery but worn out with exposure. Both British and German troops walking about the parapets looking at each other. Rifles covered with mud.

Fighting was indeed impossible. The rain came on again; the attack was further postponed and the two battalions again withdrawn. In the past week hardly any work on the existing trenches had been possible, almost the whole labour of the troops having been concentrated on carrying up stores for the attack and (a most difficult task under these conditions) the digging of "jumping-off" trenches in front of and behind the front line. The old trenches were now in such a state that the 56th was brought out over the open in preference to wading through the saps. Even so, the two miles' journey to "Carlton Trench" near Longueval occupied six hours and utterly exhausted the troops. The operation having been again postponed to November 5th, the infantry of the 5th Division was relieved by that of the 2nd, newly arrived from Ypres. There were left, however, some of the 5th Division's engineers and ambulances, and, to avoid a change of staff immediately before action, General M'Cay and the staff of the 5th Division remained in charge.

The operations had again twice been whittled down, and the assault on the first objective was now separated from the major enterprise, which on November 4th was indefinitely

<sup>24</sup> Gen. Sir John Du Cane, G.C.B.; R.A. Commanded XV Corps, 1916/18; Senior British Military Representative with Marshal Foch, 1918/19; Governor of Malta since 1927. Of Essex, Eng.; b. London, 5 May, 1865.

<sup>25</sup> Brig.-Gen. C. J. Hobkirk, C.M.G., D.S.O. Commanded 14th Aust. Inf. Bde., 1916/18; 120th (Highland) Inf. Bde., 1918. Officer of British Regular Army; of Trellech, Mon., Eng.; b. Edinburgh, Scotland, 16 July, 1869.



postponed. The Fifth (Reserve) Army's projected offensive—originally subsidiary to that of the Fourth—had thus become much the more important. As, however, its continual postponement through rain was interfering with the main winter's task of training the troops for the spring offensive, Haig proposed its abandonment, but at the urgent request of Foch, whose troops were still attacking, he agreed to wait until the middle of November for suitable weather. "While awaiting better weather for further operations on the Ancre,"<sup>26</sup> the smaller enterprises of the Fourth Army, which more closely affected the French, were deliberately pursued. It was in these that the Australians were involved.

But the conditions on the Fourth Army's front were now unimaginable except by those actually engaged, and the insistence of the higher commanders on again pressing them drew strong protest from Lord Cavan, commanding the XIV Corps, which had been carrying out repeated assaults in the mud before Le Transloy. To assist the French he had, as ordered, issued instructions for the operation on November 5th. But he desired to know whether it was deliberately intended to sacrifice the British right in order to help the French left—since a sacrifice it must be. He had already lost 5,320 men in attempts on these trenches.

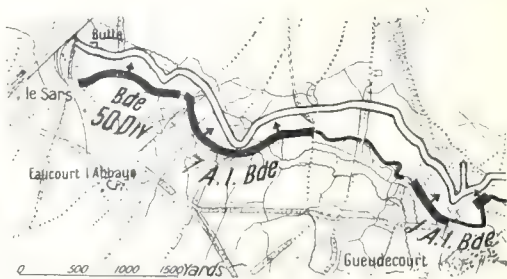
No one who has not visited the front (he wrote) can really know the state of exhaustion to which the men are reduced. The conditions are far worse than in the First Battle of Ypres; all my general officers and staff officers agree that they are the worst they have seen, owing to the enormous distance of the carry of all munitions.

These representations, supported by Rawlinson, were explained by Haig to Foch, and the plan of attack by the XIV Corps was modified. The operation in which the I Anzac Corps was concerned was a separate one, to take place, for convenience, on the same day. The III and XV Corps, whose combined front lay east and west in the valley south-west of Bapaume, had three, and in some places four, times attempted without success to gain the lower ends of the knuckles overlooking that shallow depression; the projected action would be an attempt to gain only part of them. The right division (the 50th) of the III Corps from Le Sars and

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<sup>26</sup> *Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches*, p. 48. Joffre was at this time particularly anxious to obtain visible results from the Somme offensive.

Eaucourt-l'Abbaye would attack the double German line on the flat knuckle on which lay the Butte de Warlencourt, a large ancient mound 200 yards south-west of the Roman road to Bapaume, while the left division of the I Anzac Corps assaulted the same lines farther east. Only one brigade of each division would operate; a German salient which protruded into the Australian line north of Gueudecourt, and had been formerly included in the objectives, was now to be captured in a small separate operation by the 1st Australian Division, which on October 30th had relieved the 29th Division.

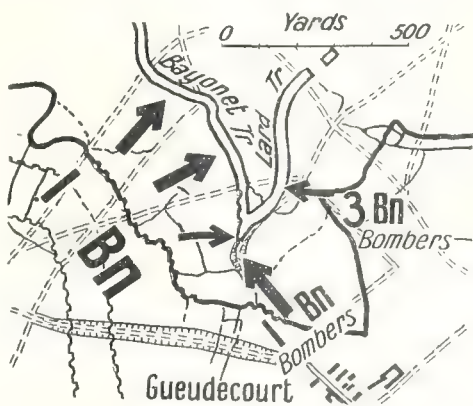


It was not intended actually to attack in the wet; and when, after nightfall on November 4th, rain began to fall, there was tense anxiety both in M'Cay's headquarters at Longueval<sup>27</sup> and in Corps Headquarters far back at Heilly as to whether the main operation, timed for 9.10 the next morning, should be countermanded. But the 7th Brigade was then on its way to the assembly position; if instructions were to reach all troops, a decision must be given by midnight. At 11.8 p.m. the commander of the British 50th Division, being consulted, gave his opinion against postponement. At 11.11, considering that the rain which had already fallen would not render the operation impossible, M'Cay informed General White that he would accept the risk and attack. At 12.30 a.m. General Paton of the 7th Brigade reported that the going in No-Man's Land was fairly good, but that the trenches were knee-deep in mud and some of the assembly trenches could not be found. To avoid the effect of rushed preparation, he recommended that the attack should be postponed for twenty-four hours. His report was telephoned by M'Cay to Birdwood, who decided that the disadvantages of delay at that stage would outweigh the advantages; the

<sup>27</sup> "Carlton Trench."

attack must therefore go forward. About the same time the commander of the tanks reported that the solitary one which remained fit for action would not be able to take part owing to the state of the ground.

The small separate operation of the 1st Division could not in any case have been countermanded, since it was to be launched half-an-hour after midnight. The objective was a small triangular salient due to the existence of a deep sunken road in a depression 400 yards north of Gueudecourt. It had been thrice attacked—on October 7th, 12th, and 18th—and on the last two occasions "Bayonet Trench," leading north-west from it, had been entered but lost again. Most of the neighbouring saps and shell-holes were waterlogged, and in the rusty wire with which the edge of the road-cutting had been protected lay the bodies of English soldiers—one had rolled in the tangled strands till they wrapped him like a cocoon. The place was now to be assaulted by two companies of the 1st Battalion from the west and by three bombing parties of the 3rd from the south. As in the other sector to be attacked, the German line was for the most part about 250 yards distant from the British and just hidden from it by a slight curve of the ground, accurate bombardment being thus rendered difficult. To reduce the width of No-Man's



Land, advanced jumping-off trenches were being dug, and the infantry was to be further assisted by a barrage laid down by half the field guns for three minutes in No-Man's Land, 150 yards in front of the enemy line.<sup>28</sup> The attacking infantry would employ these minutes in leaving their trenches and advancing towards the barrage, which would then move

<sup>28</sup> The other half of the guns would meanwhile bombard the enemy's front line.

forward at fifty yards a minute, the infantry advancing behind it to the German trench.<sup>29</sup> Machine-guns also were to cover the advance, and during the emplacing of one of these on the front parapet, early on November 2nd, the A.I.F. sustained the loss of one of its youngest and best commanders, Lieutenant-Colonel Owen Howell-Price<sup>30</sup> of the 3rd Battalion, who, while superintending the work, was shot through the brain.

The leading company of the 1st Battalion (under Captain Phillip Howell-Price, a younger brother of the commander of the 3rd), after a tiring journey through the mud from Delville Wood, arrived at the front line about sunset on the 4th and filed into the jumping-off trench before dark. The second company (forming the right half of the two waves of attack) came up under Captain Jacobs<sup>31</sup> at 9.30, partly over the open, and was seen by the enemy. Rain now began to fall. A third company, Captain Jackson's,<sup>32</sup> came up over the open at 11.15 and was lined out in shell-holes close behind the jumping-off trench. This movement also was seen, the Germans sending up several "screw" rockets as a call to their artillery, which at once laid down a light barrage on No-Man's Land. The ground was thenceforth continuously illuminated by flares from the German front line, and the Australians, lying in mud and rain in conditions of the utmost misery, were aware that their plans had been detected. At 12.20, when according to orders the first wave should have crept out into No-Man's Land to wait for the barrage, both company commanders decided that the light of flares rendered this proceeding impossible. But the support company, which was to move up to the jumping-off trench in place of the first wave, advanced and crouched in the bottom of the trench beneath the bodies of the men of the first and second waves, who, with the rain still pouring, rested their shoulders on

<sup>29</sup> Gen. M'Cay of the 5th Division had on Oct. 27 reported that, in the then-existing state of the ground, a barrage advancing fifty yards a minute would be too fast for the infantry.

<sup>30</sup> Lieut.-Col. O. G. Howell-Price, D.S.O., M.C. Commanded 3rd Bn., 1916. Agriculturalist; of Richmond, N.S.W.; b. Kiama, N.S.W., 23 Feb., 1890. Died of wounds, 4 Nov., 1916. (See pp. 12, 47, etc.; also Vol. I, 1st edn., pp. 441-2; Vol. II, pp. 538 et seq.)

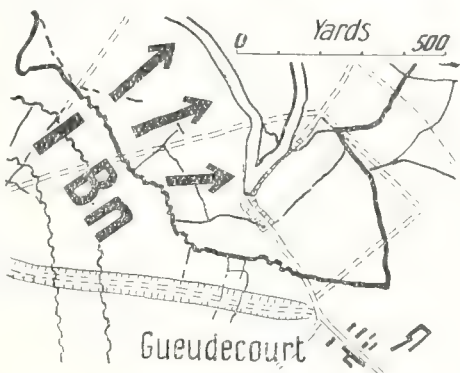
<sup>31</sup> Previously mentioned in connection with Quinn's Post and Lone Pine (Vol. II, pp. 87-8 and 546-7).

<sup>32</sup> Capt. C. Jackson, 1st Bn. Of Sydney; b. 18 March, 1888.



one edge of the trench and their heels on the other, and arched themselves in order to make room for their mates beneath.

When the barrage fell in No-Man's Land, the troops had a hundred yards to go to reach it before it advanced; but in the mud this distance could not be so quickly covered. The barrage, which had three times been practised,<sup>33</sup> was admirably thrown, but, by the time when the infantry topped the rise and came in full sight of the enemy, the line of shells had already left the German trench. The orderly advance of the two waves over the muddy No-Man's Land, wrote young Price afterwards, "was really a very nice piece of work," but, as they moved down the slope to Bayonet Trench, machine-gun fire from the right began to sweep them.

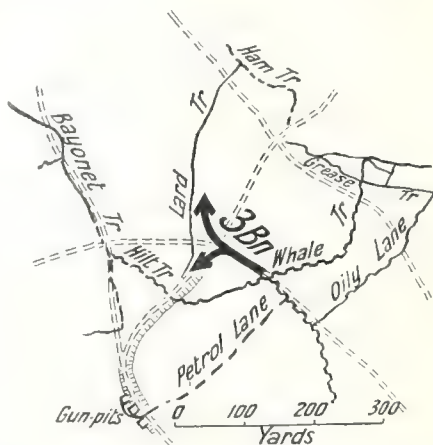


As they reached the German wire they were met by rifle-fire and a shower of bombs. "This," wrote Howell-Price, "was the turning point of what had up to the present been excellent work. Our men hesitated, and were lost." A few entered the German trench; the rest—their officers vainly trying to rally them—fled back over the rise. A few stubborn spirits remained for a short time, throwing bombs at the enemy, but the wave had ebbed.

A telephone had been established in the "jumping-off" trench, and Price, on returning thither, informed his battalion commander of the repulse and obtained leave to strengthen his line with the third company and make a second attack. This was launched at once—at 12.55—but went with less dash than the first, and when met with rifle and bomb fire fell back. "This," wrote Price, informing his battalion commander, "is not a report which I like to make, but we

<sup>33</sup> The first "trial barrage," a few days before, had been noticeably ragged, and the infantry asked for it to be practised again. In the last rehearsal it was excellent.

did our damndest to pull it off." The rest of the night was spent in bringing in the wounded, many of whom lay close to the German wire.<sup>34</sup> An attack by part of the bombers of the 1st Battalion, from the gun-pits down the sunken road on the right flank, had, as soon as it emerged, been detected by a strong German post at the bend of the road and "wiped out" by machine-gun fire, Lieutenant Finlayson<sup>35</sup> and his first two sections being mown down. His sergeant, with the remaining party, had bombed the post, but were driven back. The three bombing parties of the 3rd Battalion, however, attacking the sunken road from the south through the muddy lines of the 7th Battalion, dashed across the road and reached "Lard Trench." Lieutenant Loveday,<sup>36</sup> the leader, and a section of bombers and twenty-two others were here met by half-a-dozen Germans, who fired at five yards' range, but they killed these and then swept to the right, bombed the dugouts, and, after killing thirty-five and capturing five, seized this half of the trench. The second party, under Lieutenant Kemmis,<sup>37</sup> turned to the left, but the enemy fled before them to a strong-post on higher ground, whence they fired down and eventually forced Kemmis's party to retire. The third party, under Lieutenant Bishop,<sup>38</sup> moved out from "Grease Trench" and, joining Loveday, helped, with an additional



<sup>34</sup> Col. W. W. Hearne of the 2nd Field Ambulance was conspicuous in this work, which continued until at dawn two stretcher-bearers were shot by the enemy. It was observed, however, that the Germans themselves afterwards tended some of the wounded near their own lines.

<sup>35</sup> Lieut. R. B. Finlayson, 1st Bn. Bank clerk; of Wollongong, N.S.W.; b. Wollongong, 6 March, 1890. Killed in action, 5 Nov., 1916.

<sup>36</sup> Lieut. L. W. S. Loveday, M.C.; 3rd Bn. Clerk; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Casino, N.S.W., 14 July, 1893.

<sup>37</sup> Capt. L. F. Kemmis, M.C.; 3rd Bn. Farmer and grazier; of Quirindi and Willala, N.S.W.; b. Armidale, N.S.W., 1 Sept., 1881.

<sup>38</sup> Lieut. H. McK. Bishop, 3rd Bn. Wheelwright; of Bega, N.S.W.; b. Moruya, N.S.W., 12 Jan., 1894. Killed in action, 5 Nov., 1916.

working party, to dig a trench back to the Australian lines. This had almost been completed when about noon the failure of the 1st Battalion was definitely ascertained and all parties of the 3rd were necessarily ordered back. No ground, therefore, was gained. The night attack, made in circumstances which rendered success almost inconceivable, had cost 170 casualties (including nine officers) in the 1st Battalion, and 38 in the 3rd.<sup>39</sup>

The rain, however, cleared after midnight, and the morning for the larger attack broke, as the meteorological staff had foretold, fine but with a furious wind blowing sixty miles an hour. Two of the three battalions of the 7th Brigade responsible for the Australian share in the operation had taken over the front line on the night of November 3rd; of the others, the 25th, which was to form the centre, and the 26th—the reserve—were to have moved up from Carlton Trench, Longueval, on the night of November 4th. But at this juncture there occurred several serious hitches. First, through the state of the roads, the rations of the brigade were twenty-four hours late, and on arrival were sent on pack-mules straight to the front. But as the orders were that the attacking battalions should take these rations into the fight—as well as their emergency (or “iron”) rations—the commander of the 25th Battalion held back his troops near Longueval waiting for them. Half-an-hour before midnight, still having no word as to the arrival of the rations, he ordered his companies to move, leaving behind a party to bring the supplies if they arrived. The delay resulted in a breakdown of the night's arrangements. The reserve battalion (26th) had gone forward ahead of the 25th, which lost its way. The approach of dawn found officers of the 25th desperately seeking the right direction while their men sat on a forward slope where in daylight the enemy guns would have shattered them. The leading files of the battalion

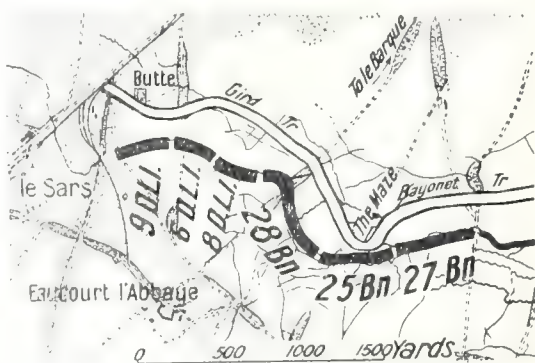
<sup>39</sup> In the 1st Battalion the officers killed were Lieuts. J. H. McIntyre, H. M. Lanser, R. B. Finlayson, N. J. Mullarkey, and F. S. Phillips. Lieut. Bishop of the 3rd was killed next day by the short shooting of the supporting heavy batteries, which, without sufficient notice, were called on to fire in a gale of wind; in the same occurrence nine of his men were killed and seventeen wounded. (McIntyre belonged to Marrickville, N.S.W.; Lanser to Waverley, N.S.W.; Finlayson to Wollongong, N.S.W.; Mullarkey to Kogarah, N.S.W.; Phillips to Casino, N.S.W.)

reached the front line a few minutes before the hour of the attack. According to a statement by the medical officer, some of the men sat down and simply wept with fatigue.

Nor was this the only miscarriage. To enable the attacking troops to clamber out of the trenches, which in parts had been rendered deep by the constant throwing out of mud, 600 scaling ladders were to be provided. At noon on November 4th these ladders were only beginning to reach the Longueval area, and General M'Cay was faced by the certainty that they would not arrive in time unless drastic measures were taken. He accordingly authorised one of his staff officers, Major King, to requisition the horses of the field ambulances and to have the ladders carried forward on the sledges which were to have brought back the wounded. In spite of the protests of its commander, all the horses of the 6th Field Ambulance at the advanced dressing-station<sup>40</sup> were then commandeered, as well as twenty from the 7th Field Ambulance. Before dawn the animals were worn out, and many of the sledges broken, but the ladders had been delivered at the front, though in some parts too late for distribution.

The 50th (North-umbrian) Division was to attack with three battalions on the left, and the 7th Australian Brigade with three on the right; these troops were to be in position during the dark, so that there would be no preliminary movement in day-

light to give warning to the enemy. But shortly before dawn, as the 25th Battalion, which was to assault the projecting



*Plan of attack, November 5.*

<sup>40</sup> At "Thistle Dump," near Longueval.

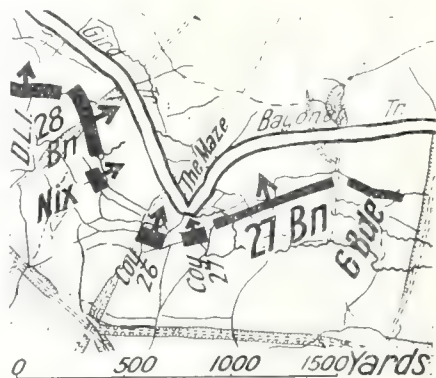


triangle known as "The Maze,"<sup>41</sup> had not arrived, General Paton determined to substitute for it the reserve companies of his two flanking Battalions (27th and 28th) and one company from his reserve (26th), forming them into a composite battalion under Colonel Walker of the 25th, who had come forward ahead of his troops. While Paton was standing with Walker on the parapet—the trenches being too muddy—arranging the necessary movement, a German sniper wounded him. Walker, though next in command of the brigade, remained for the time being to direct the temporary battalion. A company of the 27th (South Australia) formed its right, and one of the 26th (Queensland and Tasmania) its centre. One of the 28th (Western Australia) was to furnish its left, but, as the head of the 25th (Queensland) was now approaching, the foremost company of that battalion was chosen instead. Just as the barrage fell, this company arrived at the head of the communication trench, "Turk Lane," somewhat to the left of its proper position, and its fine young commander—Captain Nix of Pozières fame—led it straight forward over the sap-head.

The men were desperately weary and short of rations; but the day was bright and clear, the wind a cool gale, the barrage prompt and good. On the other hand the task of getting the 7th Brigade into the line in time for this offensive had been too hurried to permit of thorough preparation. Although the written orders both from M'Cay and Paton were clear, a vital alteration appears to have been made in those given to some of the front-line troops. As in the 1st Division's attack, to help the troops to cross No-Man's Land, the barrage, starting at 9.10 a.m., was to lie for three minutes in No-Man's Land, 150 yards short of the German line. The infantry would leave their trenches at 9.10 and would have three minutes in which to catch up this barrage before the guns advanced their fire fifty yards a minute and

<sup>41</sup> This was the point where a strong double loop-line ("Gallwitz Stellung"—"Gird Trenches") of the old third German line ("Below Stellung"—"Flers Line") ran into the existing British front. The Germans had dug two short switches ("Spatny Riegel" and "Neuer Spatny Riegel") connecting the uncaptured part of the Gird lines with their front farther east in "Bayonet Trench" ("Lichtenfels Stellung"), and these, with two communication trenches, formed "The Maze." (See plates 68 and 69 and Vol. XII, plate 284.)

the infantry moved behind the barrage to attack the German line. But the actual order which reached at least part of the infantry was that they should not move until 9.13. How far this fatal error extended will probably never be known. The fact remains that, although the going in No-Man's Land was better than was expected, the infantry in this attack were far distant from their barrage. When, after clambering from slippery trenches and threading their way through stubble between the shell-holes, they presently caught sight of the German trench for which they were eagerly watching, the few grey helmets which marked it appeared to be still 150 or even 200 yards distant, and the shells of the barrage were already bursting farther ahead. Other grey helmets quickly appeared in growing numbers as the German sentries warned the garrisons. In The Maze—opposite the Australian centre—clusters of the enemy could from the first be seen firing with all their energy into the advancing lines on either side of them. The Maze trenches, having been wrongly marked in the earlier maps as being partly in British possession, had to a great extent, if not entirely, escaped the artillery-fire; and, as part of them were left unattacked owing to Nix's company emerging too far to the west, their garrison maintained this fire with impunity throughout the operation. Nix was killed; the left battalion (28th) was enfiladed but continued to advance, although the enemy's front line (Gird Trench) was now crowded with Germans, who, some of them standing on the parapet, poured in heavy rifle-fire. When several machine-guns began



to appear, the Western Australians, dropping into shell-holes, at first shot down the gunners; but others took their places, and within a few minutes the enemy had beaten down this opposition, and thenceforward deadly machine-gun fire pinned the 28th to the crater-field, fifty to a hundred yards



66. AUSTRALIANS IN IMPROVISED SHELTERS NEAR MONTAUBAN, WINTER OF 1916

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E45.*



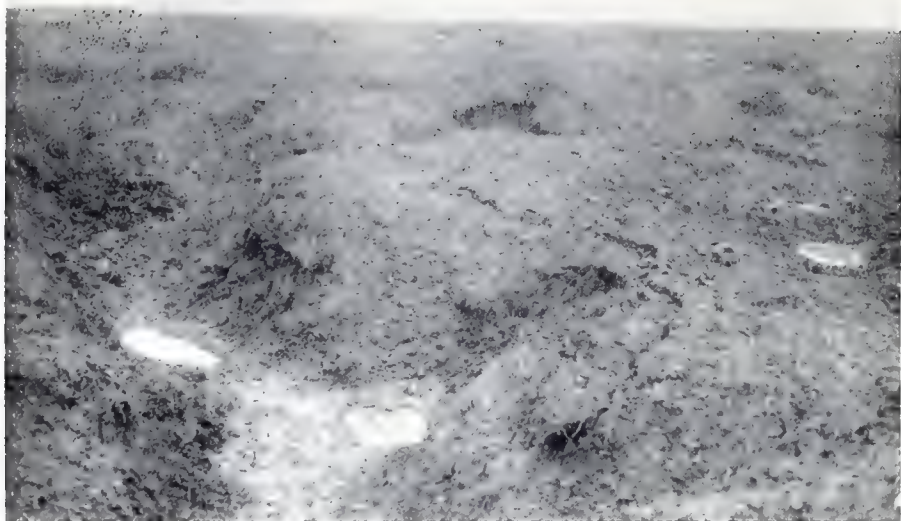
67. AN AUSTRALIAN DRIVER AND HIS PACK-HORSE

It was noted that, in spite of great difficulties and hardships, Australian drivers kept their horses in excellent condition.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2.*

*To face p. 912.*





68. THE "MAZE" AT "YELLOW CUT"

Part of the trenches attacked by infantry of the 2nd Division on the 5th and 14th November, 1916.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E220.  
Taken in February, 1917.*



69. YELLOW CUT, LOOKING NORTH-EAST FROM THE MAZE

A branch of the sunken road leading from Ligny-Thillois to the German front line. The photograph was taken (in February 1917) at the point where this "road" ran through the trenches held by the Germans during the winter.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E248.*

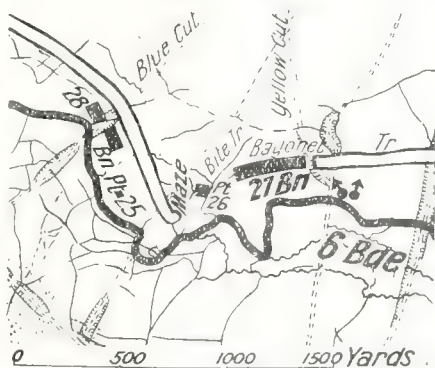
*To face p. 913.*



in front of the German line. The neighbouring British attack, as far as the Butte de Warlencourt, suffered the same fate; but on the extreme left the British swarmed over the sides of the Butte and seized a trench between the old chalk pit (from whose contents the Butte had been made) and the Bapaume road. The German garrison, however, in dugouts beneath the far side of the mound, resisted all attempts to seize the Butte.

The right Australian battalion (27th) had, like the rest, first seen the Germans 200 yards away busily preparing to resist. On its left about The Maze the enemy was thick, and throughout the advance machine-guns fired from there and from a distant trench on the left front ("Bite Trench"), but from the right, where the 6th Brigade had pushed out some Lewis guns into No-Man's Land to cover that flank, there came little interference, and the centre company of the 27th under Captain Elder,<sup>42</sup> screened from the worst of the fire on its left, succeeded in rushing several hundred yards of Bayonet Trench. This appeared to be, like parts of the British front, merely a line of connected shell-holes, and was garrisoned by a series of posts with bombs but without rifles.

Part of the companies on either flank also reached this trench, and for an hour and a half Elder's men dug solidly to improve the position. All was thought to be well, but he had not succeeded in establishing firm touch with the flanking companies when, about 10.30, bombing was heard on the right and he found



that the Germans were attacking his trench. Stick bombs could be seen flying, and a file of enemy bombers reinforcing along the bank of a half-sunken road ("Yellow Cut")<sup>43</sup> on

<sup>42</sup> Major J. D. Elder, M.C.; 27th Bn. Physical culture director; of Glasgow, Scotland, and Adelaide, S. Aust.; b. Dunfermline, Scotland, 5 Dec., 1888.

<sup>43</sup> See plates 68 and 69.

his right, fully exposed and offering a splendid target. But rifles were mostly blocked with mud and hardly a shot could be fired. Elder's men, after finishing their own bombs, used German stick grenades, of which a large number lay about. A pigeon message was sent, and this duly arrived at the "loft" of the army corps; but before action could be taken the handful of the 27th—driven in, now, from left as well as right, and with its bombs running short—began to break from the trench. Elder was eventually forced out and, after lying all day in a shell-hole near the German wire, returned to the Australian line at night with a remnant of his company. Part of the composite battalion, however, had succeeded in penetrating The Maze, and, being reinforced with bombs, held on despite all efforts of the enemy.

Spectators in all parts of the Anzac area had watched the steadily advancing line disappear behind the curve of the plateau. At a few points it had been observed to enter a trench, and some of the returning wounded reported that the objectives had been gained. The gale prevented British aeroplanes from reconnoitring the line, and a heavy barrage laid down by the enemy cut off with its smoke all further view. No other reports except those from Elder were received, but the commanders of the centre and left battalions believed, and reported, that their objectives had been gained. As the 50th Division knew that, except near the Butte, its troops had failed, it was arranged between I Anzac and III Corps that the British right should attack again during the afternoon. Fortunately, before this attempt was made, it was realised at the front that the Australian left was not in the enemy's trench. Two platoons of the 28th, sent forward about noon to reinforce the vanished companies, disappeared in the same manner, and the battalion scouts shortly afterwards found that both these and their predecessors were in shell-holes short of the German trench. When at dusk the survivors began to creep back, the Germans, imagining themselves attacked, threw a heavy barrage on the front.

At midday General Legge and the staff of the 2nd Division had taken over control of operations, M'Cay and the staff of the 5th returning to their own division. The intention now was that the right of the 50th Division and the

left of the Australians should attack next morning to make good the portion of the objective between their two supposed footholds. At 9 p.m., however, the 7th Brigade reported that only three weak companies of the 25th were available, and these quite exhausted. The operation was therefore cancelled, and shortly afterwards reports of reconnaissances (among them, one by Major Bachtold of the 14th Field Company, sent forward to dig communications to the positions supposed to have been captured) first brought home the fact that no Australian troops were in the enemy line except at The Maze. The British also had been driven from their gains near the Butte. Except for the tiny foothold in The Maze, which was lost a few days later, no ground had been won. The enemy's shell-fire was not comparable with that of Pozières, but in proportion to the numbers engaged the loss had not been slight—700 in the 50th Division and 819 in the 7th Brigade.<sup>44</sup> The latter was forthwith relieved by the 5th.

The Germans opposed to the Australians in this attack were fresh troops of the 4th Guard Division. Like the British, the enemy had been sending away to quieter fronts troops worn out upon the Somme, and bringing them back when refreshed. Thus the XIX (Saxon) Corps, after opposing the Australians at Pozières and subsequently holding a quiet sector near La Bassée, had been back in the Somme area athwart the Bapaume road when the Australians returned. Here the XIX Corps, besides its two proper divisions, had two others under its command, the whole forming a "Group," of which there were four (now entitled "A," "B," "C," and "D") on the battle-front of the First German Army, north of the Somme. The group controlled by the XIX Corps was "B"; its front extended from near Pys to Le Transloy.

After about three weeks' heavy fighting, it was being relieved on November 4 by the Guard Reserve Corps (the same which had relieved it beyond Pozières, had faced the Australians at Mouquet Farm, and, like them, had been sent to rest at Ypres). The Saxons were suffering under British pressure and bad weather, and, as before,

<sup>44</sup> The details of these are as follows:—Brigade Headquarters—1 officer; 25th Battalion—4 officers, 77 others; 26th Battalion—5 officers, 132 others; 27th Battalion—10 and 303; 28th Battalion—7 and 288; 7th Machine Gun Company—1 and 5; 7th L.T.M. Bty.—2 others. Officers killed (or died of wounds): 25th Battalion—Captain J. E. Nix; 26th Battalion—Lieutenants J. M. Kennedy and J. J. Smith; 27th Battalion—Captain E. A. Warren, Lieutenants J. R. Sommerville, B. Whyborn, E. B. Olifent, F. T. Measday, R. W. Rees, and R. H. Guthrie; 28th Battalion—Lieutenant W. R. Moore. (Nix belonged to Charters Towers, Q'land; Kennedy to Geelong, Vic.; Smith to Hurstville, N.S.W., and Maryborough, Q'land; Warren to Mount Gambier, S. Aust.; Sommerville to Hindmarsh, S. Aust.; Whyborn to Denial Bay, S. Aust.; Olifent to Henley Beach, S. Aust.; Measday to Glenelg, S. Aust.; Rees to Port Adelaide, S. Aust.; Guthrie to London and Adelaide; Moore to Narrogin, W. Aust.)

their relief, originally intended for November 6, had to be hastened. The 1st Guard Reserve and 4th Guard Divisions were moving into the line opposite Le Sars and Flers respectively, the 23rd (Saxon) Reserve and the Bavarian Ersatz Divisions on their left forming the remainder of the group.<sup>45</sup>

The German staff had on November 1 discovered the presence of the 5th Australian Division in the line at Flers, and also the disappearance of the 2nd Australian from the front at Ypres. From this German General Headquarters had conjectured that the whole I Anzac

Corps was being brought to the Somme in order to provide reserves for a new attack. Other British divisions also were disappearing from the Ypres sector, and everything seemed to point to preparations by the British to attack on a broad front south of the Ancre, and possibly north of it also. On November 3 the 1st Australian Division was identified in the line north of Gueudecourt, and one of its men, after capture, gave the information that a general attack was to be made during the coming week along the whole Somme battle-front. If this failed, he said, operations would cease. The German staff was convinced that this was accurate, and that the British were only waiting for good weather to launch an attack extending as far north as Gommecourt.

The Germans were thus in possession of the original plan, but were unaware that, more than a fortnight before, it had been abandoned for a less extensive one. They had also noted that, in the area to which the Australians came, troops moved about with extraordinary freedom at from 2,000 to 3,000 yards behind the British front line. On November 3 German observers reported continual movement in the distant lines behind this sector, assemblies of troops near Eaucourt l'Abbaye, and a strong eastward movement of British batteries. The artillery of the XIX Corps was accordingly warned, and its southern wing was strengthened in order to guard against an attack on Le Transloy, the capture of which would have "turned" the German reserve trench-line on the slopes south of Bapaume.<sup>46</sup>

Such was the situation when the Guard Reserve Corps came into the line. The historian of the 4th Guard Division recognises that its position was on the whole a strong one—its back country hidden from observation except by aeroplane, its own artillery observers well posted on the Bapaume heights, and its guns in hidden positions. Moreover the troops of the Guard Reserve Corps were much elated by finding their airmen at last active overhead.



<sup>45</sup> The machine-gun company of the 2nd Guard Reserve Regiment brought with it two Lewis guns captured at Mouquet Farm.

<sup>46</sup> The "R. I Stellung" ("Till Trench"). Behind this on the heights there would still have lain the incomplete "R. II Stellung" skirting the southern edge of Bapaume.



On November 4 it was observed from air-photographs that trenches were being dug by the Australians threatening the small German salient north of Gueudecourt. So great appeared the risk of its being cut off that the corps staff considered the possibility of evacuating the place; but the 23rd (Saxon) Division,<sup>47</sup> some of whose troops held the salient, was opposed to this, as it might allow the British to outflank other positions. It was therefore decided not to withdraw until a new line had been built farther back, to bridge the gap which the withdrawal would create.

The expected attack—delivered (as already described) by the 1st Australian Brigade that night, and repulsed—was interpreted by the Germans as an attempt to gain a position from which flanking fire could be brought to assist the more important assault which they judged to be imminent. That attack, duly occurring at 9.10 a.m. on the 5th, fell upon the whole front of the 4th Guard Division, but barely extended to either of its neighbours. A German report states that the British aeroplanes were prevented by storm from patrolling, and the British artillery was in consequence affected, its lack of method being remarkable. The infantry, in the mud, fell easy victims to the fire of the German infantry. The length of Bayonet Trench seized by Captain Elder was in the sector of the 5th Foot Guards, which employed a reserve company to counter-attack.<sup>48</sup>

The rest of the Australian attack and all except the extreme left of the British had been faced by the II Battalion, 5th Guard Grenadiers. After the battle this unit was relieved by the I Battalion. As the Australian nest in The Maze could not be ejected, a special bombardment of its position (Spatny Riegel) was ordered; but, according to the history of the 4th Guard Division, this post was not retaken until early on November 11. The German staff, having learnt that the 2nd Australian Division had taken over the front at midday on the 5th, assumed that this must indicate a desperate intention to continue the fight, and consequently imagined the attack to have been made on a much greater scale than was actually the case. This mistake found its way into the German *communiqué*, and into several German histories.

The attempt to advance in this sector—though no vital object was to be gained and the effort had already four times failed—was, through some process of mind extremely difficult to understand, at once ordered by the Fourth Army to be repeated at the earliest suitable moment. But November 7th was a day of drenching rain and wild gale, and—partly in consequence of the concentration of energy upon works needed for the next attack—the conditions became so appalling that this operation, at first fixed for the 9th, was eventually postponed until the 14th. Indeed, the attacks of November 4th-5th and 14th and the interval between them

<sup>47</sup> This division had moved into the line about the end of October.

<sup>48</sup> Saxon troops were still in reserve. One of their companies was sent to take this company's place; another carried ammunition for the 5th Guard Grenadiers.

formed the most trying period ever experienced by the A.I.F. on any front. On his journey into the trenches, each infantryman now carried his greatcoat, waterproof sheet, one blanket, 220 rounds of ammunition, and, when fighting was in prospect, two bombs, two sandbags, and two days' reserve rations, besides the remnant of that day's "issue." Thus burdened, the troops dragged their way along the sledge-tracks beside the communication trenches, the latter—except in the actual front-system—being now never used. But the sledge-tracks also were by this time deep thick mud, which, especially when drying, tugged like glue at the boot-soles, so that the mere journey to the line left men and even pack-animals utterly exhausted. In the dark those who stepped away from the road fell again and again into shell-holes; many pack-animals became fast in the mud and had to be shot, and men were continually pulled out, often leaving their boots and sometimes their trousers. Three of the 25th Battalion had to be dug out of the "jumping-off" trench on November 5th; a company commander of the 5th Pioneers was dragged out by a mule; a few weeks later a rescue party broke the back of an officer of the 2nd Division whom they were trying to haul from the mud. After each fight, when the carriage of wounded across this area had to be performed almost entirely by stretcher-bearers,<sup>49</sup> these men, working in four or five relays of six or eight to each stretcher, were quickly worn out; and, though detachments of the 21st and 24th Battalions worked devotedly as well as all the available bearers of the field ambulances, numbers of wounded, after being tended at the forward aid-posts, had to be left lying for twelve hours in the open without blankets<sup>50</sup> for want of men to carry them. When sledges became available, single horses were often unable to drag them. A man of the 27th has recorded that when, after lying in No-Man's Land for five days with a smashed leg, he was eventually brought to the trenches by stretcher-bearers under a white flag, he had to be dragged thence over the mud area by three horses attached to a sledge.

<sup>49</sup> See *Vol. XII, plate 279*. (On Nov. 5 the horses which were to drag sleighs with the wounded had been worn out by taking ladders to the front line.)

<sup>50</sup> The sleighs for bringing the blankets had been used for bringing up the ladders.

Coming into the trenches under such conditions, and starting their tour of duty in a state of exhaustion, the garrison of the front line usually had to stay there forty-eight hours before relief. At first the men tried to shelter themselves from rain by cutting niches in the trench-walls, but this practice was forbidden, several soldiers having been smothered through the slipping in of the sodden earth-roof, and the trenches broken down. If, to keep themselves warm, men stamped or moved about, the floor of the trench turned to thin mud. At night the officers sometimes walked up and down in the open and encouraged their men to do the same, chancing the snipers; but for the many there was no alternative but to stand almost still, freezing, night and day. Captain Morgan Jones<sup>51</sup> has recorded that he saw one of the 20th Battalion standing with his feet deep in the mud, his back against the trench-wall, shaken by shivering-fits from head to foot, but fast asleep.

Mud and mud (says the diary of the 18th Battalion on November 8). Men cannot stand still long in one place without sinking up to their knees. Rations arrived, but it was only with great difficulty they could be carried up.

"Taking 'em up," said a youngster afterwards, "we were so 'done' we didn't give a damn whether a shell got us or not; but after dumping 'em we began to take an interest in life again." No fires were allowed in the front line,<sup>52</sup> and at this stage no food or drink could arrive there hot—except occasionally tea, which was carried in petrol-tins and reeked so strongly of gasoline that men declared after drinking it they dared not light a cigarette.

In all British divisions subjected to them since the middle of October these conditions had resulted in the occurrence of the form of frost-bite commonly known as "trench feet." This trouble, resulting from local stoppage of circulation, and too often ending in gangrene and the actual loss of the foot, could be prevented by discarding the tightly-wound puttees and wrapping loose sandbags instead around the

<sup>51</sup> Capt. C. P. Morgan Jones, 20th Bn. Journalist; of Bondi, N.S.W.; b. Cheltenham, Glos., Eng., 10 April, 1889.

<sup>52</sup> "Tommy cookers" (small tins of solidified alcohol) and primus stoves were used in the front area, but the supply of both was utterly inadequate, and kerosene for the primuses was insufficient.

shins, wearing loose boots unlaced at the top and regularly taking them off and rubbing the feet with whale-oil, drying feet and boots in specially provided drying-places, putting on dry socks, and maintaining the body with one hot meal daily and an occasional drink of hot coffee or cocoa. Its ravages early in the war had been met by making it a disciplinary offence to neglect these precautions and regarding its prevalence as a disgrace to the unit in which it occurred. Most of these precautions, however, were utterly impossible in the conditions then obtaining on the Somme.<sup>53</sup> In the last week of October the 29th Division had to report that 164 cases had been admitted to field ambulances, the 4th (British) 159, and the 9th (Scottish) 95. In the week ending November 4th the 33rd and 17th Divisions (responsible for most of the week's fighting in the mud) reported 278 and 212 respectively, the 5th Australian 167, 1st Australian 112, 8th British 106. From November 4th to 11th the largest figures were: 17th Division 363, 1st Australian 231, 2nd Australian 205, 33rd Division 104, 50th Division 71. But—like the battalion war-diaries, most of which do not even mention “trench feet”—these figures, officially reported, probably give but a slight notion of the true number of cases.<sup>54</sup> After a tour in the line during this continued wet-weather offensive, practically all the men in many Australian battalions were suffering from “trench feet,” at least in its incipient stages. Thus, when the 27th Battalion (7th Brigade) was relieved after the fight of November 5th, ninety per cent. of its men were said to be affected. In the 5th Brigade (which relieved the 7th) the 17th Battalion, coming out of the line 498 strong<sup>55</sup> on the night of November 9th, sent to hospital an officer and 150 men, mostly with trench feet, and reported that 140 others would be unfit

<sup>53</sup> For example, in the deep sticky mud the boots and sandbags would be pulled off the men's legs.

<sup>54</sup> In the case of the Australians, at all events, the numbers known to have occurred are difficult to reconcile with the numbers shown in the Fourth Army report. Most were also cases of exhaustion, and were possibly reported by divisions as such. The D.M.S., Fourth Army, on Nov. 10 drew the attention of the Adjutant-General's branch to the fact that “very large numbers of Australian divisions were going sick; 1,500 have been admitted to Casualty Clearing Stations in the last 36 hours. They are not suffering from any disease, but are merely tired and exhausted.”

<sup>55</sup> Not including some 200, detached for semi-permanent fatigues such as road-making, who were not available to the unit during its tour in the front line.



for duty for several days. Its sister battalion, the 18th, reported 4 officers and 132 men sent to hospital, and another 100 unfit for duty.

Although the Adjutant-General's branch of the Fourth Army staff expressed the opinion that trench feet was "merely a matter of discipline," and circulated a foolscap sheet setting out the measures to be taken to prevent it, the medical authorities of Fourth Army and Corps were under no misapprehension as to the difficulty of carrying them out. With conditions so bad that some of the 6th Brigade had to be dug out of their trench before they could be relieved, and that the mere movement from Delville Wood to the front line occupied the greater part of a day, alleviation would not be secured by discipline alone. Lieutenant-Colonel Graham Butler, the D.A.D.M.S. of I Anzac, proceeding to the advanced dressing-station and living there, kept his superiors well informed.

The sick wastage of all divisions in the front line is going up rapidly (noted the D.M.S. of the Fourth Army on November 3), more especially among the Australians. This is principally due to the exhaustion of the troops and the appalling conditions of wet and mud and discomfort under which they exist in the front line. It is impossible while fighting is going on to do anything to alleviate it.

This conclusion, hopeless though it might seem, was almost literally true. The one alleviation possible at that time was to cut down the duration of each battalion's tour in the front line. This had accordingly been reduced to four days—the companies spending two days in the firing line and two in support—and sometimes less. But the reserve position in Switch and Gap Trenches, where another three days were usually spent, was merely an open muddy drain<sup>56</sup> in which men suffered almost as severely as in the front line. Most authorities well realised what ought to be done. The prime need was for the communications to the forward area to be so improved that material, and troops in fresh condition, could arrive there to commence its improvement. Both Generals Walker (1st Australian Division) and Legge (2nd Australian Division) reported to this effect, and Legge urged that the troops, if they were not to attack for a

<sup>56</sup> See a photograph taken there on 23 November, 1916—*Vol. XII, plate 273*.

week, might be so informed, in order that the energy wasted in keeping them in constant readiness for attack might be turned to the improvement of the communications. Gellibrand and others advised that duckboard tracks should be laid—not in the communication trenches, which were impassable, but over the open beside them.

None of these suggestions, however, could at the moment be complied with, nor could attention be turned primarily to the front area, since a trouble even more serious had now occurred farther back. On October 31st, under the constant traffic—chiefly of ammunition lorries for the heavy artillery—the Mametz-Fricourt road broke down and had to be closed for a few hours; on other roads there occurred long blocks in the traffic which lasted for hours at a time, the crowded vehicles standing for as much as a mile on either side of the points of blockage while the traffic-control men, or some officer who happened to be handy, had the obstacle<sup>57</sup> cleared and gradually worked the traffic through. The danger here was not from the enemy; the German air force, though much more active than during the summer, missed the opportunities, offering daily and nightly, of bombing this crowded mass.<sup>58</sup> But lorries and even ambulances took twelve hours to make a circuit of a few miles; the actual supply of food to the troops became precarious; and the staffs of Corps and Army found themselves faced by the imminent probability that all motor-traffic on roads to the active front would come to a complete standstill. Consequently by far the most urgent need of the moment was to strengthen the roads: the first measure for improvement even of the front trenches was to remake the roads, so that the lorries could bring up material for laying down tracks over which could be carried duckboards and other material for making tracks farther forward. By these the required materials would eventually reach the front line.

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<sup>57</sup> Usually a bogged lorry

<sup>58</sup> The Germans occasionally shelled the Longueval and Bazentin trains, whose steam they could see, and whose whistles they could hear. They regularly shelled the dumps at The Quarry, and one shell, hitting a lorry on the road from Montauban to Longueval, killed 12 men and wounded 13. But German airmen, though they set the sky aglow on Nov. 6 by igniting a French ammunition dépôt at Cerisy, failed to bomb the congested roads.

An energetic—at times a desperate—campaign to overcome the winter conditions had been launched by the I Anzac Corps as soon as it took over the area. The 5th and 1st Divisions had noted that the long distance between the front line and supporting troops, headquarters, and supply dépôts, though no disadvantage during the summer, was now a cause of trouble and danger.<sup>59</sup> The headquarters and supply and engineer dépôts of the 5th Division were respectively 15,000, 17,000, and 23,000 yards from the front line. The 350 men of the 8th Brigade<sup>60</sup> in the forward lines were supported by 300 in "Flers Trench" a mile to the rear, and by another 300 in "Crest Trench" 3,000 yards farther back. The brigade reserve (one battalion and the surplus troops) was farther away still, at Montauban. The result was not only tactically dangerous—since, if the enemy attacked, it would be hours before the supporting troops could have reached the front—but the long journeys wore out the troops on relief, blocked the traffic, and broke down the roads.<sup>61</sup> It was therefore urgent to advance both the camps for the reserves and the dumps of supplies. This meant the building of hutments and of railways, and, until these could be supplied, everything depended on the roads.

These conditions affected all corps of the Fourth Army. In the I Anzac Corps the burden of the campaign against them centred on one man, General White. Partly because every branch of the corps work was affected, and partly because he was known to all as a man who "could get things done," almost every branch contrived to have recourse to him; and during this, the most difficult period of the A.I.F.'s existence, he wielded an influence never approached by that of any other officer of the A.I.F. with the exception of General Monash at the end of the war. Two days after the arrival of corps headquarters he attacked the problem in a memorandum laying down a policy for roads, railways, and camps, and requiring careful forecasts to be made of the

<sup>59</sup> There are recorded observations to this effect by Lieutenant-Colonel A. B. Carey (of Hendon, Middlesex, Eng.) of the 5th Australian Division, and General H. B. Walker of the 1st.

<sup>60</sup> This brigade's sector was at first a narrow one, and only part of the troops were taken forward.

<sup>61</sup> Despatches from corps and divisional headquarters took so long to get through that arrangements had to be made to communicate even the most secret information over the telephone or telegraph lines—a course usually avoided.

traffic so that it might be systematised. The main lines of this policy—further elaborated and discussed at conferences attended by himself, General Carruthers, and the engineers of the divisions—were as follows:

In pursuance of the policy of Fourth Army and XV Corps, the broad-gauge railway was to be thrust as far forward as possible in the gullies behind the Second Line Ridge, one branch (already in use) following an

old French narrow-gauge line from Fricourt as far as a quarry in the gully north of Montauban; the other (to be ready about mid-November) diverging from this up a more northerly gully past Bazentin to Longueval. A huge dump was already being established at the "Quarry Siding," and Decauville railways were to be forthwith constructed from

The Quarry to Longueval, and from Longueval forward into the area of each division. A specialist being called for to control the building and operation of the light railways of the I Anzac Corps, Lieutenant-Colonel Fewtrell<sup>62</sup> of the 4th Pioneers, formerly in the railway service of the New South Wales Government, was appointed and was allotted for the work half a battalion of pioneers and several field companies. The even more urgent work on the roads was partitioned among officers appointed to take charge of specially divided "districts" and "sub-districts."<sup>63</sup> There were allotted for this labour three battalions of infantry from the forward divisions, three British "labour" battalions, an Australian pioneer battalion, and several odd companies—a total of nearly eight battalions. The only hope lay in digging great drains and in patching the tracks with timber beams laid "corduroy" fashion. By November 6th 440 tons of road metal were arriving daily at Quarry and Willow Sidings.<sup>64</sup> The traffic-control



*Original scheme of railways, I Anzac Sector.  
(A sketch of the railways eventually constructed will be included in Volume IV.)*

<sup>62</sup> Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Fewtrell, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded Aust. Mining Corps, 1915/16; 1st Anzac Light Railways, 1916/17. Civil engineer; of Sydney; b. Chester, Eng., 12 March, 1885.

<sup>63</sup> Colonel Carey, C.R.E., 5th Division, on whose careful observations and recommendations the schemes of railways and roads were largely based, was given charge of the "circuit" roads from Bazentin to The Quarry; Lieutenant-Colonel V. A. H. Sturdee (of Melbourne) took charge of the road from Albert to Montauban.

<sup>64</sup> "Willow Siding" was on the broad-gauge railway near Fricourt; 7,000 pit-props were delivered there about the same date for use on corduroy roads, and 5,000 railway sleepers at "Quarry Siding."



police increased their posts, the best known of which were at "Cosy Corner," near Montauban, and a very dangerous post in Longueval. They were also reinforced by some of the corps cavalry and cyclists.

In his scheme of camps White provided that each of the two front-line divisions must have, close behind the crest of the Second Line Ridge at Bernafay and Bazentin respectively, hutments for two infantry brigades and their attendant units; behind these in the "staging area" were to be three camps each for a whole brigade—near Fricourt, Mametz, and Montauban.<sup>65</sup> The scheme of works, which included also the making of three defence lines forward of the crest of the ridge, the provision of deep dugouts in the forward area, the building of sidings, provision of water-supply, tanks, bathing and drying places, and horse-standings, the manufacture of trench stores, well-sinking, loading and off-loading, and the burying of cable-lines, called for a great force of labour, of which part was furnished by British labour units attached to the Corps, but at least half by the divisions themselves.<sup>66</sup> Many of the detached parties could not be recalled by their units for tours in the front line, and through this cause and "trench feet" the fighting strength of battalions fell very low—in some cases, to less than 300.

In this, as in all other trials of the war, the Australian troops were undoubtedly helped by the typically Anglo-Saxon habit of looking upon any current struggle as a joke, with the opponent usually as the butt. This attitude, ingrained in British people partly through their love of sport and partly from their horror of betraying their deeper feelings, was as strong in the Australians as in any troops. It is exhibited in the majority of letters from the front; it is found in official reports and messages sent from the thick of the fighting; it leaked into the despatches not only of war

<sup>65</sup> The third division (in reserve) and the fourth (far back in the training area) were in villages clear of the battlefield.

<sup>66</sup> Thus on Nov. 2 in the reserve division (2nd Australian Division) the 5th Brigade had 16 officers and 992 men on these works and the 6th 23 officers and about 1,000 men. In other brigades the numbers were probably somewhat less. At that time the following British troops were working for the Anzac Corps: 13th Field Company; 178th and 258th Tunnelling Companies; 133rd, 134th, 149th, 217th, and Sussex Army Troops Companies; 12th (Devon), 2nd, 37th (Royal Fusiliers), and 22nd (West Yorks) Labour Battalions.

correspondents, but of generals. It is found in most regimental histories, and even the official histories may not be entirely unaffected by it. A pose which refuses to regard the horrors of war as serious may not always be wholly beneficial, but for men in the midst of those horrors it is an unmixed advantage, and it unquestionably lightened for both British and Australians the excessive burden of this winter.

German accounts make it evident that the enemy's infantry, though subjected to severe hardships in the muddy front and support lines, was suffering no such extremes of discomfort as the British. His front was lightly held, in a series of posts, with supports in depth. His communication trenches, it is true, were mostly useless, and later in the winter one or two men were said to have been drowned in the mud in two dreadful sunken roads—"Blue Cut" and "Yellow Cut"—by which troops were guided from the villages of Le Barque and Thillois to the actual front.<sup>67</sup> The muddy area on the German side was, however, merely a narrow strip along the front. The slopes leading down to it were green. The cellars of Bapaume, two and a half miles behind the front line, offered quarters for troops, and, though the villages beyond were subject to recurrent air-raids and long-distance shelling, they were all used for billets, and the surrounding country was intact. The 4th Guard Division suffered from shell-fire during its movement to the front line; but the dreadful weariness and exposure, which at this time rendered every relief on the British side a nightmare agony, are barely referred to in German narratives. At the beginning of November, the 23rd (Saxon) Reserve Division opposite Gueudecourt, and the Bavarian Ersatz Division adjoining it on the south, applied for relief—the former on grounds of suffering through sickness and wet, the latter because its numbers had fallen so that it could no longer give its battalions rest. To the 23rd Reserve Division was accordingly lent the 392nd I.R. to relieve some of its troops; the Bavarian Ersatz Division was allowed to use those of its own troops formerly held back for corps reserve. The sick rate of these divisions is not shown in the available records; but that of the 4th Guard Division on certain dates (November 11—6; November 14—6; November 15—5; November 16—4) shows that the wastage cannot have been comparable to that of most Australian or British divisions on the Somme mud.

The German artillery, on the other hand, was subjected to deadly counter-battery "shoots" from which the British was almost entirely free. This was due to the fact that the German aeroplanes, although more numerous than before and occasionally venturing to machine-gun the infantry in the British trenches, seldom crossed the front lines, whereas the British pilots looked on the German front lines as their starting point. The British heavy artillery was thus directed with such accuracy that, in the 4th (Prussian) Guard

<sup>67</sup> Many similar statements were later current on the British side; their truth is difficult to ascertain, but no definite cases of unwounded men drowning in shell-holes are found in the official records thus far examined.

Division alone, on November 5 fourteen guns and howitzers (including eight 5.9-inch) were put out of action. Between November 6 and 14 twelve on an average were put out of action daily; on November 15—sixteen; November 16—fifteen; November 17—twenty-one; November 18—twenty-two; and thereafter from six to thirteen daily.

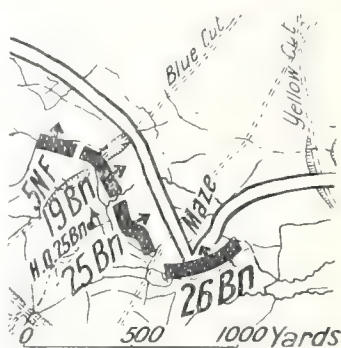
Except in the case of the railways, which were able to take the wounded from Quarry Siding on November 5th and from near Longueval on the 14th,<sup>68</sup> the energetic measures adopted by the I Anzac Corps to meet the adverse conditions lacked the time to affect the arrangements for the next fight; indeed, in the forward area they were hampered by the preparations for it. The 19th and 20th Battalions, which on the night of November 9th relieved the 17th and 18th, suffered so acutely that after two days Colonel Ralston of the 20th urged that his troops should be withdrawn. The brigadier, Holmes, refused, being of opinion that the battalion could stand another day of it. On the night of the 12th, however, they were relieved by two battalions of the 7th Brigade, the 25th and 26th, lent to the 5th Brigade because the 17th and 18th were unfit for the line. The 19th and 20th came out to Switch and Carlton Trenches expecting a rest; but they had barely settled down after the march when their commanders and, later, the company commanders were called to brigade headquarters and it was explained to them that their battalions must return to the line as soon as night fell—the 19th Battalion to deliver with the 25th and 26th the renewed attack, and the 20th to support.

A convenient "jumping-off" trench had been dug by the 2nd Pioneers along the left half of the front. This, the chief labour of the past week, had been well carried out, although Germans had seen the parties and at least once driven them in with machine-gun fire, mortally wounding a Lewis gunner<sup>69</sup> of the covering party who pluckily fought

<sup>68</sup> This method had been suggested by General M'Cay to avoid the dreadful delays of ambulances on the congested roads. In the second fight (November 14) the small Decauville trains carrying material for constructing the Longueval railway were, on their return journey, to pick up the wounded at the advanced dressing-station ("Thistle Dump"), close beside the railway, and carry them to Quarry Siding. There all cases—both the lightly and the seriously wounded—were to be placed in broad-gauge trains (leaving about every six hours) and carried to the main dressing and collecting stations at Bécordel, south of Albert.

<sup>69</sup> Private H. C. Moor (of Grafton, N.S.W.), 18th Battalion, a young English emigrant whose father had been the hero of a fine incident in the sinking of the s.s. *Berlin* in 1907.

them shot for shot. On this occasion Bayonet Trench was omitted from the objectives, the right of which was The Maze.<sup>70</sup> The barrage was to advance at the same rate as before,<sup>71</sup> but, in order to allow the troops more time to catch up, it was to continue for six minutes instead of three in No-Man's Land before advancing. This advantage was nearly thrown away through the reluctance of some of the battalion commanders to order their troops to leave the trenches during the preliminary six minutes. But, on General Legge pointing out that this had caused the previous week's failure, the brigadier (Holmes) compromised by ordering his troops to leave the trenches three minutes after "zero," thus giving them three minutes to catch up the barrage. The 25th and 26th (mainly Queensland) Battalions, forming the centre and right of the Australian attack, had hardly recovered from their experiences of November 5th, and Holmes, who went round their lines the day before, reported that they were "pretty cheap." But, he added, "when spoken to cheerily, they realise that matters would be still worse if it were raining. On the whole they are not too bad."



Zero hour was fixed on this occasion at 6.45 a.m.<sup>72</sup> The weather had been fine since November 9th, and the ground was certainly not heavier than on the 5th. But the Germans, knowing that an attack was to come, not only laid down their barrage so promptly that it caught the last waves of the attack, but had also a few hours before the attack re-erected some of the battered wire-entanglements at The Maze. The right battalion of the Australians, the 26th (Queensland and Tasmania), attacking that sector, succeeded in crossing certain

<sup>70</sup> The foothold won on November 5 by the 7th Brigade in The Maze had (according to German accounts) been lost on Nov. 11. Brigadier-General Holmes was entirely wrong when, in writing to General Legge on Nov. 7, he expressed a doubt whether the 7th Brigade had ever held a post beyond its old front line in this neighbourhood.

<sup>71</sup> Brigadier-General Gellibrand had on Nov. 7 reported to the chief of staff of the 2nd Division that he considered the rate should be 25 yards a minute (instead of 50), but this advice was not adopted.

<sup>72</sup> Clocks had been put back an hour on October 1. This was therefore true time.



parts of the front trench and entering the second, but was quickly repulsed and by 8 o'clock was reported, though uncertainly, to be back in its original line. The centre and left battalions, 25th (Queensland) and 19th (New South Wales), were reported to have taken both objectives (Gird and Gird Support Trenches). By 9 o'clock word had been received that the 50th British Division had seized part of its objective just west of the Australians; but it was later reported that its attack elsewhere had failed, and touch with the successful troops had been lost, except through the Australian position. The British brigade commander accordingly ordered a new attack to be launched to the left of the captured position. On the Australian right the 26th had already been ordered by Holmes to renew its attack on the nearer trenches of The Maze, and was strengthened first by one and later by a second company of the 20th Battalion.

On this day the air was, for the time being, in possession of the Germans, who had sixteen aeroplanes overhead. The one British machine which attempted to patrol was driven away while the enemy reconnoitred as he pleased.<sup>73</sup> It was doubtless partly for this reason that the reports received by Holmes differed widely from the facts. It was true that his left battalion, the 19th, advancing with extraordinary rapidity on the skirts of the barrage, had arrived at the German trench "with the last shell" (as the Germans prisoners put it).<sup>74</sup> This swiftness appears to have been partly due to the fact that the 19th, instead of waiting in its trench for three minutes, as ordered, advanced at zero with the Northumberland Fusiliers, whose barrage arrangements were different from its own. Some of the enemy were caught hurrying up their dugout stairs with machine-guns; a few were shot;<sup>75</sup> others made for a sunken road (known as "Blue Cut") leading through the muddy crater-field towards Le Barque.

<sup>73</sup> There had recently been great activity in the air. On November 9 26 British planes attempting to bomb Vraucourt dump were attacked by more than 30 German machines—"the biggest air fight which the war had yet seen." (*The War in the Air*, Vol. II, by H. A. Jones, p. 315.)

<sup>74</sup> When examined by British intelligence officers these prisoners, whose regiments had previously faced the Australians at Mouquet Farm, all agreed in declaring with emphasis that, among the Germans, the Australian infantry had the reputation of attacking with much more dash than the average run of troops.

<sup>75</sup> Sergeant P. D. Jones (of Leichhardt, N.S.W.) of the 19th dropped into the trench among three Germans; he shot the first two and, as the third turned to run, bayoneted him.

The first two waves of Australians were to hold the German front line, and the third and fourth to go on to the enemy's support trench, 150 yards beyond; but the four lines had been thrown out of order in crossing the mud and one of the two company commanders responsible for the farther advance (Captain Anderson<sup>76</sup>) wounded. The other, Lieutenant Dent,<sup>77</sup> took forward his men after some re-organisation, and Captain Scott<sup>78</sup> of the first wave independently



led forward a dozen men on the right.<sup>79</sup> They had been warned that air-photographs showed that only parts of the support trench might be in existence, and both parties found only broken sections of trench. The enemy had fled; not a German was in sight; and, after occupying the position, Dent with one companion<sup>80</sup> pushed out still farther to make certain that the proper trench did not lie beyond. After going 150 yards he was wounded by a shell and was unable to return.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile Lieutenant Trenerry<sup>82</sup> searched for the second objective for several hundred yards to the left of the sunken road, but could find no trace of it. No British or Australian troops could be seen to right or left, and, as word came along the advanced line that it was being fired on from the rear, Captain Scott returned to the first objective to ascertain the position. Here also he found that—except

<sup>76</sup> Major R. C. A. Anderson, O.B.E.; 19th Bn. University student; of Sydney; b. Petersham, N.S.W., 30 April, 1893.

<sup>77</sup> Capt. A. E. Dent, 19th Bn. Clerk; of Gosford, N.S.W.; b. Elsternwick, Vic., 13 Sept., 1894.

<sup>78</sup> Major W. J. R. Scott, D.S.O.; 20th Bn. Insurance inspector; of Sydney; b. Bingara, N.S.W., 21 June, 1888.

<sup>79</sup> One of this party—a young Lewis gunner, Private F. B. Healy (of Newcastle, N.S.W.)—had had his hand smashed as the attack started. Nevertheless, thinking that a Lewis gun might be required at the second objective, he carried one thither. Later in the day he was killed.

<sup>80</sup> Sgt. F. G. Toovey (No. 1772; 19th Bn.). Labourer; of Burragorang, N.S.W.; b. Burragorang, 16 July, 1896. Killed in action, 14 Nov., 1916.

<sup>81</sup> After endeavouring for several days and nights to get back to the Australian lines, he was captured. His companion was never again heard of.

<sup>82</sup> Capt. W. L. Trenerry, M.C.; 19th Bn. Bank clerk; of Manilla and Paddington, N.S.W.; b. Queanbeyan, N.S.W., 29 Nov., 1892.

for some Lewis gunners of the 25th who had advanced with his own troops, and a mixed party of the 5th and 7th Northumberland Fusiliers under a highly capable officer, Lieutenant Armstrong,<sup>83</sup> on the left—there were no troops of his own side on either flank of the 19th. Where the bulk of the 25th should have been was a straight empty length of boggy trench, apparently regarded by the enemy as unfit for occupation. The main part of the 25th, which in this fight lost many of its tried Pozières leaders<sup>84</sup> who had survived the previous week's engagement, does not appear to have seized any portion of the objective.

Major Sherbon of the 19th having been killed about 6.20 a.m. while placing the troops in position, Captain Scott was now in command of the whole advanced line. The party holding the German support trench was eventually withdrawn, losing some men by shell-fire on the way,<sup>85</sup> but in the first objective the position was made fairly secure by posting bombers and Lewis gunners on—and also in rear of—each flank. Lieutenant Armstrong held the left, reinforced by the Lewis gunners from the 25th and by fifty of his own brigade who reached him about nightfall. Lieutenant Trenerry held the right, with a Lewis gun looking down the straight muddy trench which Scott preferred not to occupy. In spite of hostile fire, a communication trench across the old No-Man's Land was dug in three hours by some of the 2nd Pioneers under Captain Taylor,<sup>86</sup> who was seriously wounded during the operation.

A T-head with a front of about 500 yards had thus been gained in the German lines; but the attacks projected with a view of making good the two flanks proved extremely difficult to organise. On the British front this operation was first ordered for 4 p.m., then postponed to 6.30, but rendered impossible by a heavy barrage laid down by the enemy at 5, which held up the preliminary movements. Eventually at 11 p.m. two companies attempted to advance; but the first

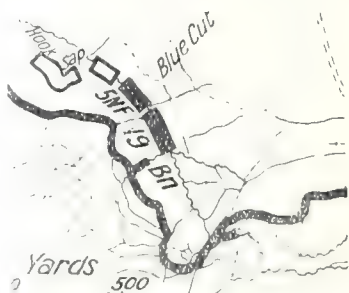
<sup>83</sup> Lieut. H. Armstrong; 5th Bn., Northumberland Fusiliers.

<sup>84</sup> Including Captains C. M. Johnson, W. F. Donisch, and Lieutenant W. P. Healy, all of whom were killed.

<sup>85</sup> Lieutenant J. Helms (of Cloncurry, Q'land), commanding this party, was with it at the beginning of its retirement, but was never afterwards seen.

<sup>86</sup> Captain W. Taylor, M.C.; 2nd Pioneer Bn. Clerk; of Sydney; b. Coolabah, N.S.W., 18 March, 1892.

men to get out were met by such an outburst of fire that the order was cancelled. The fire came from Germans who had penetrated into some old trenches<sup>87</sup> intervening between the attacking British troops and their advanced detachment under Lieutenant Armstrong. The detachment was thus thoroughly cut off from its own division, and, pending a further attack—now planned for November 16th—was rationed and munitioned by the 5th Australian Brigade.



On the other flank the repetition of the 26th's assault, ordered by General Holmes in the belief that the 25th had gained its objective, was not delivered, in spite of repeated orders from the brigadier, until 4.45 p.m. The commander of the 26th then employed for the purpose not his own troops,<sup>88</sup> but two companies of the 20th which had been sent to support him. The Maze had previously been bombarded, not very accurately, with Stokes mortars. The two waves of the 20th, after some show of unwillingness from part of the men, climbed out and advanced, boldly enough, but too far to the right. The delay entailed in putting them straight allowed the Germans to set up machine-guns, and the advance was stopped. About the time when he heard of this, Holmes was also informed that the 25th was back in the jumping-off trench, and, believing that its attack had been successful and that for some unknown reason it had abandoned its objective, he ordered it at once to return thither. A composite battalion of the 6th Brigade under Colonel Forbes of the 21st Battalion had been lent to him as reserve,<sup>89</sup> and one of its companies (detached from the 24th Battalion) was now sent to the 25th's front line. As the commander of the 25th could find only ninety men for the attack—and those very tired—this company was eventually lent to assist in the effort. But here also the attempt to

<sup>87</sup> Known as "Hook Sap" and "Blind Trenches."

<sup>88</sup> A third wave of men of the 26th was organised, but the attack failed before this wave had emerged.

<sup>89</sup> This battalion had at first been placed under the young commander of the 24th, Major Nicholas—the same who had captured a German machine-gun at Pozières (see p. 697)—but he was killed when leading his troops to the front line.



carry out the dreadful tasks of that front by means of troops of one battalion or brigade placed at the disposal of another proved highly unsatisfactory. Through a long series of orders, delays, and persistent misunderstandings, the night of November 14th and most of the 15th elapsed without this attack taking place.

Meanwhile in the advanced T-head the 19th, under Captain Scott, and the party of British on his left still held out. The trench was well stocked with material abandoned by the enemy, and (to quote a contemporary diary) Scott's men were—

fighting the German with his own rifles and ammunition and bombs; ate his food, drank his mineral waters, and warmed his cold coffee with his solidified alcohol . . . and used his Very pistol and flares.

A few hours after dark<sup>90</sup> on the 14th the Germans counter-attacked up the trenches on both flanks and over the open from the front. Here, however, as at Pozières, the possession of so portable a weapon as the Lewis gun was of incalculable advantage to the British side. A Lewis gunner of the 19th, posted in a shell-hole in front of the line, saw the enemy by the light of a flare, and by opening fire gave timely warning.<sup>91</sup> The attack on the front withered before the fire of rifles and Lewis guns; and, although the enemy came nearer on the flanks, endeavouring to bomb up the trenches, all attempts were repulsed. On the right, where a section of German bombers could be clearly seen by the light of the flares with which they signalled the stages of their advance, the Australians let them turn into the straight muddy trench and advance up to a marked point forty yards from Trenerry's barricade, and at that distance—just out of bomb-throw—swept them away with the fire of a Lewis gun.<sup>92</sup> At 2.15 a.m. on the 15th the Germans renewed the attack on the flanks, but were again repulsed. The Australians—then about eighty strong, without greatcoats or

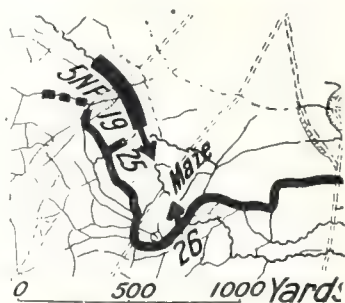
<sup>90</sup> Scott gives the time as 10.30 p.m. The history of the 5th Guard Grenadiers gives 1.5 a.m., but mentions only one counter-attack.

<sup>91</sup> Lance-Corporal Louis Lewis (of Mungindi, N.S.W.), a Lewis gunner, with two other men of the 19th, spent the whole day in a shell-hole 150 yards in advance of Scott's position actively sniping at the enemy.

<sup>92</sup> It is said that for nearly 48 hours Private F. D. Thompson (of Oatley, N.S.W.), in charge of the gun, hardly took his eyes off this point.

sheepskin vests, and fighting, on their own initiative, with German rifles so that they could pass on all their own cartridges to the Lewis guns—were still firmly in possession at day-break.

At day-break General Holmes himself, as was his wont, came through to his front posts<sup>93</sup> and discovered—and personally explored—the fifty yards of muddy, empty trench beyond the right-hand barricade. No sign of the enemy could be seen even beyond that length, and accordingly Holmes on his return ordered the 25th Battalion immediately to carry out its part in the long-delayed attack. This was now to take the shape of a bombing attack along Gird Trench from both ends, the 25th (strengthened by the supporting company of the 24th) issuing from the barricade of the 19th Battalion, and the 26th advancing from its own bomb-stop near The Maze. Holmes's impatience was increased when an artillery officer reported having made his way through Gird Trench from the position of the 19th to that of the 26th without meeting



a soul.<sup>94</sup> After much delay a party (afterwards reported to have consisted of twelve of the 25th and forty of the 24th) made its way some distance down this sap; but the officer in charge, finding the mud so deep and sticky that the transport of bombs would be impossible, withdrew his men, leaving Sergeant Gordon<sup>95</sup> and a few of the 25th to clean out a small sector. Meanwhile, after delays due to deep mud, a party of the 26th under Lieutenant Stapleton<sup>96</sup> attempted to bomb up from their end; but by this time there was a strong German post in the trench, and on meeting this, Stapleton

<sup>93</sup> Holmes as usual wore his "staff cap" with its brilliant red band, and his companion, Captain MacCallum, naturally did the same.

<sup>94</sup> According to the records of the 2nd Division, this occurred at 5 p.m. on the 15th—that is, about the time when the attempt to occupy the trench was made. Unless the Germans had temporarily withdrawn, the report is inconsistent with other narratives, British and German, which state that the trench was occupied.

<sup>95</sup> Sgt. J. B. Gordon, D.C.M. (No. 373; 25th Bn.). Labourer; of Brisbane, Q'land; b. Banffshire, Scotland, 1887.

<sup>96</sup> Lieut. (temp. Capt.) C. A. Stapleton, M.C., D.C.M.; 26th Bn. Station hand; of Charters Towers, Q'land; b. 15 March, 1894.

decided that further progress in the mud was impossible. After the relief of the 26th, which occurred that night, six bombers of the 27th became stuck in the mud at this point, and freed themselves only by leaving their rubber boots behind. Stapleton's decision therefore appears to have been justified.

During the night of the 15th the companies of the 19th Battalion in the T-head were relieved by three from the 28th, and the British by two companies of the 4th East Yorkshire. There was impending an attack from the neighbouring British positions against "Hook Sap"; the Australians also would probably have undertaken to expel the enemy from the trench on their right, in which he was now definitely established; but at 4.30 in the afternoon of November 16th, before either of these operations took place, the enemy launched a surprise attack against the front and both flanks of the T-head. The position had been shelled at odd intervals since the afternoon of the 15th, and especially after 4 p.m. on November 16th, but not so constantly as to cause expectation of an attack. The attempts against the Australian front and flank withered. But the East Yorkshire on the left—who, being overlooked by the Germans in Hook Sap, were forced to keep low in their trench—were surprised by a sudden discharge of grenades which killed or wounded the party at their barricade. A considerable portion of the British garrison now broke back through the Australian trench to their own lines; but the Western Australians checked the enemy's advance, and Captain A. Brown (who had commanded in O.G.2 at Pozieres) immediately formed a plan of counter-attack. An attempt to bomb out the enemy was hopeless, the German bomb-supply being the greater; but Brown had ample men for a bayonet attack—he had, indeed, on the previous night sent back one company because



the trench was too full. He therefore directed Lieutenant Barber<sup>97</sup> and the nearest part of the 28th, together with an officer and some of the men of the East Yorks, to climb out of the rear of the trench into shell-holes, and, on a signal from himself, suddenly to charge the flank and rear of the German bombers as they passed along the trench. Meanwhile he had the S.O.S. signal fired—two red rockets and one white. The men near him climbed out into shell-holes, but Brown, on rising to lead the attack, was shot through the neck. He had passed word to other officers to carry on if he failed; but Lieutenant Barber was killed, and no other leader of the same quality was immediately at hand. The men—not in good heart—began to break back, and, by the time word reached Lieutenant McIntyre<sup>98</sup> at the other end of the T-head, the Germans had almost reached the sole communication trench. Some of the garrison escaped by this avenue before it was closed; others, after vainly fighting for its head, retired over the open. About twenty who had been posted in advance of the T-head were completely cut off before they knew what was happening, and were captured unwounded.

In the display of rockets and flares of all colours which, as usual, accompanied this German attack,<sup>99</sup> the S.O.S. signal had passed unnoticed; and through a defective system of intelligence the several German preparatory bombardments, which should have given warning of the enemy attack, had not been reported to headquarters of the 2nd Division. It was nearly 5.50 p.m. before General Legge learnt, through the 50th British Division, that the trench was attacked, and at 6.6 he heard from the same source that it had been lost. Lieutenant-Colonel Wisdom, who had succeeded Paton in command of the 7th Brigade, rightly decided that, if the Germans occupied it in strength, any attempt to retake it with the troops at hand was out of the question. As his

<sup>97</sup> Lieut. R. E. Barber, 28th Bn. Insurance clerk; of South Perth, W. Aust.; b. Timaru, N.Z., 8 Aug., 1888. Killed in action, 16 Nov., 1916.

<sup>98</sup> Capt. J. McIntyre, M.C.; 28th Bn. Millhand; of Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 22 Aug., 1893. Killed in action, 28 Feb., 1917.

<sup>99</sup> These were signals from the German storm-troops to the machine-gunners, artillery, and others, to show how far the attack had progressed.





70. GERMAN ARTILLERY OBSERVERS ON THE HEIGHTS BETWEEN BAPAUME AND PÉRONNE

The photograph (taken on 27th November, 1916) shows the country close behind the German lines.

*German Official Photograph.*

*To face p. 930.*



71. GERMAN DUGOUTS DURING THE WINTER ON THE SOMME

Those here shown were in a canal cutting, probably opposite the French front near Allaines. *Inset:* A German sentry in The Maze, winter of 1916-17.

*German Official Photograph.*  
*Inset: From the History of the 5th Guard Grenadier Regiment.*

patrols found it strongly garrisoned, no such effort was made. Its capture had cost the Australians 901 casualties, and the British between 500 and 600. The casualties of the 28th Battalion, mostly incurred in its loss, were 82.<sup>100</sup>

This attack, like that of the previous week, had been hourly expected by the Germans. Prisoners taken in the fighting of November 5 had stated that one more big effort was to be made by the French and British before the offensive was abandoned, and the German G.H.Q. considered it probable that this attack would extend from the neighbourhood of the Bapaume road to Gommecourt. It was observed on November 10 that the Australians were digging a jumping-off trench closer to the German line; and on the 13th a feint barrage laid down on the whole British front to assist the Fifth Army's offensive convinced the Guard Reserve Corps that the assault upon its front was now imminent. Towards evening it was observed that British troops were assembling in the jumping-off trenches and in dead ground near The Maze. "All enemy measures," it is said, "pointed to preparations for an attack." Consequently the III Battalion of the 5th Guard Grenadiers, then holding the line, sent forward part of its 12th company, "with ample ammunition" to assist the 9th company, which, together with the 10th and 11th on its left, was holding the front actually threatened.

After a comparatively quiet night, which (says one German account)<sup>101</sup> was employed by these companies in improving their wire and strengthening their firing line, the 10th company at 6.15 a.m. reported that the enemy was digging close in its front. About the same time the 9th and 11th reported that the trenches in front of them were filling. The German infantry therefore called upon its artillery for fire, which became gradually stronger until, at 6.45, the "drum-fire" of the British artillery broke out, falling heavily both on the front trenches and on the back area.

<sup>100</sup> Out of a fighting strength of 267. The detailed losses of the other units engaged were: 19th Battalion—11 officers, 374 others; 20th Battalion—4 and 67; 25th Battalion—6 and 174; 26th Battalion—8 and 170. The 5th Machine Gun Company also lost 1 officer and 22 others; 5th L.T.M. Bty.—1 and 2; 21st Battalion—21 other ranks; 24th Battalion—1 officer and 38 others. Officers killed (or died of wounds) were: 19th Battalion—Major I. B. Sherbon, Lieutenants A. J. Gurr, W. A. Somerset, J. Helms, W. M. Stewart; 20th Battalion—Lieutenant F. Dunbar; 24th Battalion—Major G. M. Nicholas; 25th Battalion—Captains C. M. Johnson, W. F. Donisch, Lieutenants W. P. Healy, R. W. Grant; 26th Battalion—Captain W. H. Gartrell (who died while in the enemy's hands), Lieutenants L. A. Ward, W. A. Macintosh; 28th Battalion—Lieutenant R. E. Barber; 5th M.G. Company—Lieutenant T. Tennant. In the 20th Battalion Captain H. R. Rush and Lieutenants R. H. F. Carlisle and D. Gavan Duffy were killed by a shell in Carlton Trench immediately after coming out of the fight. (Sherbon belonged to La Perouse, N.S.W.; Gurr to Sydney; Somerset to Elsternwick, Vic.; Helms to Cloncurry, Q'land; Stewart and Dunbar to Sydney; Nicholas to Melbourne and Trafalgar, Vic.; Johnson to Townsville, Q'land; Donisch to Dalby, Q'land; Healy to Sydney, N.S.W., and Wellington, N.Z.; Grant to Windsor, Q'land; Gartrell to Charters Towers, Q'land; Ward to Ipswich, Q'land; Macintosh to Rockhampton and Barcaldine, Q'land; Barber to South Perth, W. Aust.; Tennant to Port Kembla, N.S.W.; Rush to Marrickville, N.S.W.; Carlisle and Gavan Duffy to Melbourne.)

<sup>101</sup> *History of the 5th Guard Grenadier Regiment*, p. 323.

It was on the right of the 10th company that the 19th Australian Battalion and the British on their left penetrated the German trenches, capturing the company commander, Lieutenant von Bülow, and a platoon commander. The German account says that in The Maze the Australians penetrated the wire and threw bombs, but were beaten back through the courage of the newly-promoted commander of the 11th company, Lieutenant of Reserve Wynen, who himself replied with bombs but was killed. The Germans record two attempts of the 19th Battalion to advance farther and seize Gird Support; the advancing troops are said to have run into their own barrage, to have been fired on from their rear by two German machine-guns, and to have been thus forced back into the first trench.

It was obvious to the Germans that their opponents had suffered heavily; their dead were strewn so thickly that German supports, when later sent forward, mistook them for new forces lying out ready to attack. The 9th company, which still held its front line west of the captured sector, immediately counter-attacked Lieutenant Armstrong's position, but was driven back, the British apparently following it up and being stopped only after considerable loss to the Germans. An Australian thrust eastwards made with weaker forces is said to have been easily stopped in boggy ground.<sup>102</sup> As the Germans had lost heavily and the trenches of their opponents were observed to be again filling, the front-line companies refrained from further counter-attack.

News that a small part of his front trench had been lost reached the commander of the III Battalion, 5th Guard Grenadiers, Major Roosen, at 8 a.m. He at once ordered a platoon of his reserve company, the 12th, to counter-attack. This platoon, however, in advancing over the open was so cut up by artillery-fire that few men reached the 10th company. At 11.30 a.m., on request from the front, the rest of the 12th and a platoon of the 11th were loaded with bombs and sent up to reinforce the 9th, their places in support being taken by troops of the II Battalion (6th and 8th companies). At 1.45 p.m. the 6th company and the 1st Machine Gun Company were ordered to counter-attack from a new trench which was being dug 200 yards back to bridge the gap in front of the 19th Australian Battalion, but strong artillery-fire and heavy loss prevented this effort being made. (This attempt to counter-attack was not specially reported by Scott, but was observed by Lieutenant Dent, then lying out wounded.)

After dark the British artillery-fire relaxed and the III Battalion was relieved by the II. The I Battalion had already been brought up to the support position. Food, drink, and ammunition were taken forward, and new arrangements made by the 4th Guard Division to retake the trench from its "tough enemy." Three storm-troops of the divisional storm-company were to attack from the flanks and the 2nd company (I Battalion) from the front. The operation (according to the German account) began, without artillery preparation, at 1.5 a.m. on November 15. The 2nd company, advancing from the new trench occupied by the 6th, half of which was to support

<sup>102</sup> No thrust in this direction was made by the 19th, whose flank merely moved down the trench for a short distance and built a block. The enemy was some distance away.



it, made the frontal attack on the Australians, but came under heavy fire, the leaders of all three waves being killed and the company commander wounded. The party of storm-troops attacking the British flank, after thrusting fifty yards, received heavy machine-gun fire and could not hold on. The party attacking the Australian flank, however, reoccupied 100 yards—apparently of previously unoccupied trench—which was then taken over and blocked by part of the 6th company. The attack having failed, the 2nd company was withdrawn, and a *minenwerfer* sent up to harass the occupants of the T-head.



At 2 p.m. on the 15th the Australians were seen concentrating opposite the German left. It is said that the 5th Foot Guards were informed by a deserter (apparently an Australian)<sup>103</sup> that a great attack was being planned for next day. The 15th was spent in trying to establish touch between the company in the newly-dug trench in front of the Australians and the German troops in The Maze, but rifle and machine-gun fire prevented this.

On November 16 the II Battalion was ordered to retake the lost position. At noon the German artillery began its programme, and—employing tactics more commonly used by the British—endeavoured to deceive or puzzle its opponents by merely increasing its fire for ten minutes each time, at 2.20, 3.5, 3.45, and 4.10 p.m. At 4.25 all batteries were turned for five minutes upon the “nest,” machine-guns and light trench-mortars assisting. At 4.30 the storm-troops, strengthened by sections from the II Battalion, attempted to attack the flanks, and a wave of the 3rd company (I Battalion) the front. The storm-troops intended for the attack on the Australian flank were broken by artillery-fire, but those on the other flank punctually launched their attack, and—according to the German account—surprised the British, who, before they could come to their senses, had lost a third of the “mud- and water-soaked position.” The leader of the German storming party, Under-Officer Krüger of the 93rd R.I.R., had been killed. The Australians now began to break, and the 3rd company, coming up at that moment in frontal attack, completed the recapture of the position. The loss suffered by the Germans in this counter-attack was small, a result attributed by them to the element of surprise.

The casualties of the 4th Guard Division for the whole fight (November 14-16) are given as 795—about half those of the British and Australians. The total casualties suffered from November 3 to 22 by the 5th Guard Grenadier Regiment, which bore the brunt of the fighting, are given as 1,041.

<sup>103</sup> Isolated instances of Australians deserting to the enemy did occur during this winter; but it is by no means safe to assume that, whenever the enemy supposed a prisoner to be a deserter, he really was one.

Thus ended a series of operations which, through the weather and the state of the ground, were undoubtedly the most difficult in which the A.I.F. was ever engaged. It was obvious that the inner working of the brigades which participated was far from perfect, and for this, on a report from Holmes, General Legge held the commanders of the 25th and 26th Battalions mainly responsible. Changes were made in the commands, and the 7th Brigade subsequently reached a standard of remarkable efficiency; but, while these changes appear to have been well justified by their results, the tactics adopted by Legge and Holmes, in simply ordering the 26th Battalion to repeat an attack which had failed, appear to have incurred some criticism from higher authority. The proper course, it was held, would have been instantly to investigate the causes of failure and then carefully plan another attack, avoiding those causes.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, the higher commanders themselves were primarily responsible for laying upon their infantry tasks which, despite certain brilliant achievements,<sup>105</sup> were certainly beyond its powers. It would be idle to suppose that any force could support without signs of bending the tremendous stresses which—for the Australians—began at Pozières and reached their climax at Flers. The morale of the A.I.F. was never low; even in the worst conditions at Flers the response of the troops often amazed even those who knew them best; but this period represented the bottom of the curve. The most certain symptom of demoralisation—desertion to the enemy—which was then happening almost daily among the German forces on the Somme, was very rare among the British and almost unknown in the Australian force. Yet during this winter there did occur one or two cases of young soldiers who, finding themselves at the limit of their endurance, walked over to the enemy. A captured German officer told of a youngster of the 4th Australian

<sup>104</sup> General White, referring to the fact that he and General Walker had made a similar mistake at Anzac (*see Vol. II, p. 604*), said: "We have not had one case in which an attack, ordered to be repeated (*i.e.*, to be repeated without the method being changed), has succeeded."

<sup>105</sup> Such as the attack by the 19th Battalion just narrated. The most brilliant, however, was probably an enterprise of the 7th Lincoln Regiment, which, on November 2, amid the worst conditions on the battlefield, followed up an unsuccessful German counter-attack by spontaneously seizing and holding part of the enemy's trench and securing a considerable number of prisoners.

Division who had come across, saying that he could no longer bear the cold and mud and want of sunlight; the officer had taken him into his own dugout and talked to him for half-an-hour—"quite a nice chap," he said. Most battalions had their unwilling squads who tried to avoid trench-service by malingering. At least one man of finer fibre, when his battalion—the 24th—was ordered to undertake the nightmare journey through the crater-field back into the line, turned to his mates and, saying simply "I'm not going in—I'm finished," shot himself. The spectacle of a battalion leaving the line—usually an occasion of lightheartedness—is thus described by a diarist who had been watching an Australian unit pass:

I was rather shocked with the look of the men. Not demoralised in any degree—but grey drawn faces—and very very grim. It is the first time I ever passed an Australian battalion without seeing a single smile on any man's face. . . . Gask (the surgeon)<sup>106</sup> tells me that they feel it more than any troops here. Their letters show it—some of them are utterly sick of the war and do not want to fight again. . . .<sup>107</sup>

There can be no question that the Australian force, reared in a land of almost continual sunshine and genial warmth, was throughout this period being subjected to intense suffering: the reserve trenches were little better than the front line; the camps, now springing up in rear of the ridge, were ankle-deep or knee-deep in mud. In the nearer rest billets (in Dernancourt, Buire, and Ribemont) the rain poured through the leaky barns, drenching the straw on which men were supposed to rest. Firewood, through difficulties of transport, was unobtainable, and the troops even in these billets could not dry their sodden clothes except by the heat of their bodies or by using for fuel the farmers' gates and fences, or the matchboard lining of military huts. Yet men held to their posts till they had to be dug out of them; and some of those with "trench feet"—in order to allow the stretcher-bearers

<sup>106</sup> Major Gask, a well-known British surgeon then working at No. 38 Casualty Clearing Station, Heilly, which served this part of the line. (Colonel G. E. Gask, C.M.G., D.S.O.; R.A.M.C. Of London; b. London, 1 Aug., 1875.)

<sup>107</sup> The Germans, who obtained a hint of this discontent from some of the men they captured, endeavoured to use it for propaganda, so as to create a rift between the British overseas dominions and the motherland by spreading the untrue assertion that dominion troops were being deliberately employed more constantly and harshly than the British. The statements quoted by the Germans were those of individual "grouzers" who, like almost all troops in this war, had very little true knowledge of what any other troops were doing.

to carry others who, they thought, were in greater need—made part of the dreadful journey from the front line to the dressing station crawling upon hands and knees.<sup>108</sup>

But the time was at hand when these troubles began little by little to diminish. The long-delayed offensive of the Fifth Army had been launched on November 13th, the day before the second action at Flers, and met with striking success. This result was especially welcome to Haig, not only for its own sake, but because (as he informed Gough beforehand) it would strengthen the hand of the British representatives at the conference of the Allies convened at Chantilly for November 16th.<sup>109</sup> Another not unimportant result was to confirm Haig's confidence in Gough. It is true that at Serre, where the ground was thick in mud and the 3rd Division was consequently unable to keep up with the barrage, this operation failed as completely as those in the valley before Bapaume; but the acute German salient astride of the Ancre, from Beaumont Hamel to the "Stuff Redoubt," was, by a magnificent advance of five divisions,<sup>110</sup> almost straightened. Further attempts to deepen the thrust were in part successful. The German troops, whose resolution had perceptibly deteriorated as the Somme battle progressed, showed a marked willingness to surrender; and by November 19th, when the advance was stopped, the British had actually secured 7,500 prisoners at a cost of about the same number of British casualties.

With this brilliant action the First Battle of the Somme—the hardest and bloodiest ever fought by the British Army—ended. The British part in it was the logical outcome of

<sup>108</sup> The spirit of many may be judged from that of a private, P. L. de Jongh (of Lidcombe, N.S.W.), 55th Battalion. About midnight two runners, R. N. Campbell (of Lithgow, N.S.W.) and de Jongh, were taking a message from the front line reporting the completion of a relief; but de Jongh did not reach headquarters. Campbell, who had been leading, remembered hearing a shell burst behind him. Later Major Stutchbury found de Jongh, crawling towards headquarters with only one leg. He had been blown into a shell-hole, pulled out by some passing men, and left as dead. Recovering consciousness, he cut off with a penknife his leg (which had been almost severed) and crawled along the track. It took Stutchbury five hours to get him to the regimental aid-post. On reaching it, the wounded man asked for a cigarette and said: "Now tell me, Doc.—have I a sporting chance?" He lived five days, but died of gangrene.

<sup>109</sup> It was especially desired to resist suggestions for the transfer of strength from the Western Front to Salonica.

<sup>110</sup> The 19th, 2nd, 51st, 63rd (Royal Naval), and 39th. The 4th Canadian Division had carried out a successful preliminary movement some days earlier.



dull, determined strategy, and the devotion of an inexperienced army. Almost the whole of the 500,000 British troops who—according to calculations made before the battle—were available for expenditure in casualties,<sup>111</sup> were duly expended; and the question arises, how far that sacrifice was justified by the results. In his despatch after the close of the battle Haig claimed: "The three main objects with which we had commenced our offensive in July had already been achieved. . . . Verdun had been relieved; the main German forces had been held on the Western Front; and the enemy's strength had been very considerably worn down." But this contention—that the offensive had been intended to wear down, rather than to break through, the enemy—though elaborated by Dewar and Boraston, Haig's loyal but not discriminating literary supporters, is unlikely to be upheld by posterity. Haig looked back upon this battle with different eyes from those with which he had planned it. No one who reads his orders, instructions, and appreciations written during the course of the long struggle can be left with the faintest doubt that his main object in the first and each succeeding phase—except the period from July 23rd to September 14th, when he was merely "wearing down" the enemy—was to break through the front of the Germans and roll up their flank.<sup>112</sup> It is true that before the offensive was launched he foresaw that his first effort to achieve that aim might not be successful, in which case he might attempt to wear down the enemy to a breaking-point and then again endeavour to create the breach. This policy of stretching the rope and then striking it from time to time to see if it would break was eventually adopted by him; the making of a breach was unsuccessfully attempted three—possibly five—times, and was again to be attempted in the spring of 1917. In the meantime Haig was convinced, upon the assurances of his intelligence staff, that the process of wearing down the enemy was proceeding satisfactorily.

<sup>111</sup> Australian documents of which the authenticity is beyond question record a statement to this effect made on 1 July, 1916, by an eminent British authority.

<sup>112</sup> See pp. 317-318, 332n, etc. The process of rolling up the German flank certainly aimed at the destruction of the German forces rather than the attainment of important localities; but by no stretch of meaning was it—or could it be—included in the connotation of the term "wearing down."

There is sufficient evidence (he wrote) to place it beyond doubt that the enemy's losses in men and material have been very considerably higher than those of the Allies, while morally the balance of advantage on our side is still greater.

It is now known that on November 15th the French, Russian, and British staffs agreed in estimating the German casualties on the Somme at 630,000 against 485,000 for those of the French and British.<sup>113</sup> A very different notion as to the relative loss was, as has been shown,<sup>114</sup> held by some careful observers at the front. There was a fairly widespread feeling that the intelligence staff at G.H.Q. was dangerously optimistic, and in England reports emanating from officers and men on leave as to the extent of British casualties caused an undercurrent of menacing criticism. But it was not until the summarised casualties of the opposing forces were officially published after the war that the extent of this tragic error was known or guessed by the majority of even well-informed critics.<sup>115</sup> Assuming the figures quoted by Dewar and Boraston to be correct,<sup>116</sup> against British losses of 463,000 incurred on the Western Front between the 1st of July and 19th of November 1916, the Germans opposite the British lost only 218,000.

<sup>113</sup> These were evidently the figures accepted by the Chantilly conference (see *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent*, by Sir Frederick Maurice). On October 7 Haig had assessed the German loss at 370,000 (see p. 887). This figure may have been partly based on an assumption that, in the seventy German divisions believed to have been engaged, the average loss had been about 5,300. It is difficult to believe that Haig's intelligence staff can have agreed with the Chantilly estimate.

<sup>114</sup> See p. 876. It has to be admitted that these doubts were not general or popular—at least in the A.I.F., which was always optimistic and constitutionally inclined to prefer attack, despite its often excessive cost, to defence. Nevertheless the opinion that the attacking troops lost more than the defending was based on observed facts. For example, Sergeant Rule of the 14th Battalion noted in his diary during the following winter: "There were not many men who hunted around and saw as much of the old Somme battlefield as I did; and one thing that always struck me forcibly was the scarcity of dead Huns and the abundance of English dead. Without counting, or trying to collect details at the time, I have since put it at three to one, and that's low to my way of thinking." Another observation on which the conclusion was at the time based was that the Germans obviously employed lighter forces than the British, especially in counter-attack.

<sup>115</sup> It is now known, however, that Winston Churchill, then a private member, at the beginning of August in a memorandum circulated by Sir Frederick Smith to the Cabinet, argued that in July the ratio of loss had been at least 2.3 British casualties to 1 German. This figure, which proved almost exactly correct for the whole battle, was arrived at by reasoning much more elaborate than the crude guesses referred to in the previous footnote, but nevertheless along the same lines.

<sup>116</sup> The figures given in *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*, compiled by the British War Office, show (on p. 360) that for the months July-December 1916 the British loss in France was 481,842 and that of the Germans facing the British 236,194. Dewar and Boraston, and also Sir Frederick Maurice in *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent*, argue that the figure representing the German loss must be wrong. Sir Frederick Maurice estimates the German casualties in the Battle of the Somme at 558,000.

Deducting from these figures the losses estimated to have been incurred on other parts of the front, Dewar and Boraston show that the figures for the Somme casualties would be 410,000 British against 180,000 German.<sup>117</sup> The balance of loss was also against the French, but not to the same degree. In round figures this period cost the two allies three quarters of a million casualties against half a million on the German side. These figures include the casualties incurred during the latter stages at Verdun and also on "quiet" parts of the front; but they may safely be assumed to indicate, at least roughly, the proportion of the German loss to that of the Allies in the First Battle of the Somme.

It is inconceivable that Haig would have persisted in his offensive on the Somme had he realised, even approximately, how much lighter than his own was his enemy's loss; nor would the Government, which at the end of July showed marked anxiety concerning the casualties,<sup>118</sup> have permitted him to do so. But the argument which he constantly used in explaining to it his determination to continue was a grossly and tragically mistaken one. Far from the German loss being the greater, the British Army was being worn down—numerically—more than twice as fast, and the loss is not to be measured by bare numbers. The troops who bore the brunt of the Somme fighting were the cream of the British population—the new volunteer army, inspired by the lofty altruistic ideals traditional in British upbringing, in high purity of aim and single-minded sacrifice probably the finest army that ever went to war. Despite the indignation expressed by one of the higher commanders at the criticism current in England, a general who wears down 180,000 of his enemy by expending 400,000 men of this quality has something to answer for. The truth appears to be that, although Haig did believe attrition to be necessary, it was, in this battle, merely a subsidiary aim—so much so that little, if any, effort or imagination was devoted to the invention of

<sup>117</sup> As stated above, Dewar and Boraston argue that the figure for the German loss is incorrect.

<sup>118</sup> The Cabinet was then contemplating with anxiety the possibility of "between 200,000 and 300,000 casualties with no very great gains additional to the present." (*Soldiers and Statesmen*, by Sir W. Robertson, Vol. I, p. 270.)

economical methods.<sup>119</sup> The best answer to Haig's critics is, not that the "wearing down" succeeded, but that from first to last he was big enough to adhere to his intentions of "breaking through," even when Rawlinson lost sight or hope of it. Haig failed to break through, and, because he failed, his literary supporters have argued that it was never his main purpose; if that were true—which it is not—the most comprehensible reason for his conduct of the battle would disappear.

It is true that the Somme offensive relieved Verdun; prevented the transfer of more than a few divisions to the Eastern Front (though it did not avert the crushing of Roumania); and strained—more by its dreadful bombardments than by infantry action—the morale of German divisions. It is beyond doubt that in this battle a considerable part of the German forces reached and passed their zenith of endurance; a decline of morale was evident to all its opponents in the last stage of the offensive, and is admitted by German historians. On the other hand the new British army, although its exalted spirit also was never again wholly recaptured,<sup>120</sup> acquired confidence and experience. To this extent the battle marked a definite step towards the winning of the war.

But the cost was dangerously high. It is not easy to resist the contention that it was fortunate for England that she furnished no more troops for this battle, seeing that whatever number she sent would have been squandered at this disproportionate rate. The question must arise whether so disproportionate an expenditure of man-power was necessary, and whether the same ends could not have been better attained by different means. It is impossible to believe that they could not. Britain was not ill-served in the matter of technical invention: by the adoption of the Lewis gun, for example, she had already far more than counterbalanced the

<sup>119</sup> The German method of attrition at Verdun put out of action nearly two opponents at the cost of one German. Assuming the accuracy of the figures already quoted, Haig's method put out of action one German at the cost of more than two British soldiers. To argue that his method was right surely involves the complacent assumption of an extraordinarily low standard of efficiency. For Haig's intentions, see *pp* 233-4.

<sup>120</sup> See the most brilliant sketch of the Great War in the English language—*Disenchantment*, by the late C. E. Montague, *chapter ix, section 3*.



former German preponderance in machine-guns. The tank—a British invention—was to become one of the deciding factors in the war. In tactical invention the British artillery staff, in contrast to the general leaders, applied its imagination to the situation of the opposing infantry, and constantly furnished the sole element of surprise to be observed in this battle.<sup>121</sup> That vital element appears almost entirely absent from Haig's strategy at this period; nor was ingenuity devoted to the invention of suitable methods for "wearing-down" the enemy.

Haig's choice of his assistants was far from perfect, and he left them much too free to pursue their several aims. Co-operation with the French was probably as efficient as circumstances allowed; but the internal working of the British offensive was from first to last marked by a lack of co-ordination of which the fighting at Mouquet Farm was merely a single instance. In spite of the press censorship and propaganda by which the Somme battle was presented to the British people as a series of victories, these defects were not unnoticed in England, and in some quarters doubts had arisen as to the capacity of the Commander-in-Chief. In France dissatisfaction with the conduct of the battle was more general, and criticism more outspoken. The report, indeed, went that Foch no longer retained his old mental and physical energy; and the discontent in political circles culminated towards the end of the year in the removal of Foch and Joffre<sup>122</sup> from their commands. The British people—though Haig was practically unknown to it, except through the now obvious efforts of the Northcliffe press to popularise him—was prone to stand by its leaders in critical times; Haig was much too firmly supported to be seriously threatened, nor indeed was there at that time any other name so outstanding as to attract the nation's confidence. He retained his post unshaken: the same relentless will which had

<sup>121</sup> Haig's opinion, expressed by his chief-of-staff in February, 1917, was: "As a result of past experience it may be said definitely that, in view of the great and prolonged preparations required, the enemy cannot be surprised as to the general front of an attack on a large scale, but only to some extent as to its exact limits and as to the moment of the assault."

<sup>122</sup> Foch was removed in November, after a motor-car accident, which offered an excuse; Joffre's removal in December was due to causes among which the failure to break through on the Somme was only the most recent.

enforced continuous tension on the British Army through half of 1916 was still to direct its effort. After Earl Haig's death in 1928, German comment made it evident that he was lightly regarded in Germany, at least by the majority of publicists.<sup>123</sup> In this lay only another proof of the characteristic inability of the German people to grasp the mentality of others—an inability which contributed more than any other cause to their ultimate defeat. Haig's leadership of his partly trained army in 1916 has been bitterly and not always unjustly criticised; in two important qualities—quick imagination and sure judgment of subordinates—he was deficient. But nations are all too prone to require in their military leaders only qualities of brilliance, neglecting those attributes which, for the attainment of the common aim, are perhaps even more essential and equally rare. The victories by which a Bonaparte pursues his unlimited objectives may prove more costly to his nation than defeats. Haig's one aim was the success of the Allies, and his sole guide in action was duty. He had the capacity of learning by his mistakes and the moral courage to change his attitude when the need became clear to him. Terrible as was to be the fighting of 1917, his conduct of the Third Battle of Ypres was marked by co-ordination almost unknown on the Somme. In 1918 his greatest blow was at last accompanied by the vital element of surprise;<sup>124</sup> and it is probable that history—if it is history and not the mere national propaganda which sometimes poses as such—will assign him a greater share than is yet recognised in the responsibility for the victories with which the war ended. It is difficult to conceive any factor more ominous to the Germans than the continued presence among their opponents of this resolute, unwavering soldier, deeply skilled in technique, but prevailing by qualities of character more than of intellect; cold and inarticulate, but with the strength to keep the British Government at arm's length; punctiliously

<sup>123</sup> The historian of the German cavalry, General D. M. von Poseck, however, in the *Militär Wochenblatt* of 25 March 1928, showed better appreciation of this former adversary.

<sup>124</sup> The limited offensive at Cambrai in November 1917 also had been launched as a surprise. An officer who knew Haig says that throughout the war he was constantly in search of methods of surprise. It must, however, be doubted if his capacity lay in that direction (*see p. 286*).

loyal to it, to his subordinates, and to his Allies; fulfilling every engagement, eschewing the intrigue which so often sullies the careers of the great; dealing in the daylight with those who would have struck him in the dark; above all, practically alone in his magnificent capacity of serving his country on occasion by quietly passing on to rivals credit due to himself, without uttering a syllable, then or afterwards, to betray the extent of his sacrifice.

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## CHAPTER XXVI

### WINTER

THE close of the Somme battle left the four divisions of the I Anzac Corps facing the winter, sharing with the army corps on their left and right admittedly the worst sector of the sodden front. Forty-five miles to the north a new Australian division, the 3rd, after winning very high praise from the great training and inspecting organisation in England, reached on November 22nd its allotted corps—II Anzac—and was sent immediately into the quiet line at Armentières.<sup>1</sup> Even in those long-established trenches winter service was harsh enough; but on the Somme the sentries, standing steadfastly along their muddy ditches, might have been looking out on the dawn of the world; a region colourless except for the grey-blue sky and the bare brown wilderness of formless mud—mud resembling that of some sea-bed newly upheaved—with here and there a derelict tank stranded like some dead sea-monster on the drenched surface.<sup>2</sup> It was seldom that anything stirred, except the tattered clouds and the shell-burst minute by minute in Gueudecourt. Most of the trenches, mere ditches in the slime, were invisible except from a few yards, and it many times happened that a man going up to the foremost line, after crossing several empty and apparently unused saps, found himself looking down into a trench occupied by a few figures in grey, and realised that he had wandered to the enemy's line.<sup>3</sup> On December 11th

<sup>1</sup> The 3rd Division had been inspected by the King on September 27. After two divisional exercises, on November 16 and 17, its training closed, and its troops began to leave for France on the 21st. They relieved Franks' Force, which had been reconstituted to hold part of the II Anzac sector, the 33rd and 34th Battalions (9th Brigade, N.S.W.) moving straight into the line on November 22, and Major-General Monash taking over command from Brigadier-General E. W. M. Powell (of Lyndhurst, Hampshire, Eng.) on the 24th.

<sup>2</sup> The Australian War Memorial contains a model of one such actual scene (the sculpture by Lieutenant W. W. Anderson and painting by Lieutenant L. F. McCubbin, both of whom served in France). This represents the conditions more clearly than any other record.

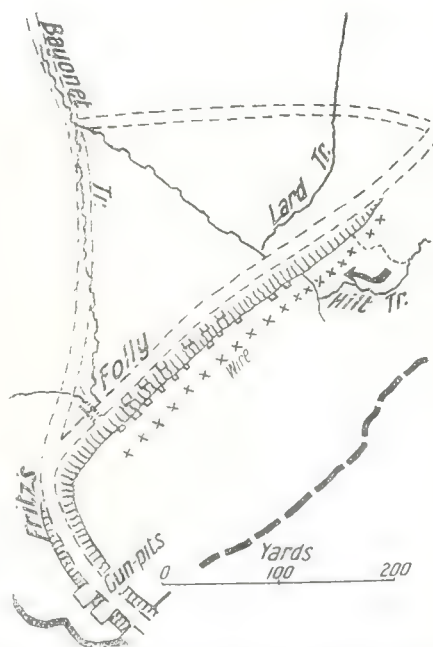
<sup>3</sup> This happened to Colonel Heane of the 1st Battalion, who was severely wounded before he regained the Australian line; the same thing very nearly occurred to Brigadier-General Elliott, who proposed to walk across from his front line to the flank trench of the neighbouring brigade. Lieutenant R. H. Knyvett, the intelligence officer, persuaded the general to let him go first. Knyvett came upon a sentry, and said: "I am the intelligence officer of the 15th Brigade." The man challenged in German. Knyvett was fired on and wounded with a bomb, but succeeded in getting back.



a party of fourteen, carrying up the morning rations of the 12th Battalion, found itself on the enemy's parapet, dropped the rations, and bolted back under fire to the Australian lines, which eight survivors eventually reached.<sup>4</sup> It is to be noted that Australian soldiers caught in this predicament almost always made the attempt, however desperate, to escape.

Fighting was now rare, but the I Anzac Corps was still charged with the task of securing the sunken road north of Gueudecourt. The attack upon this salient, now known as "Fritz's Folly,"<sup>5</sup> had been renewed on November 11th, when two bombing sections of the 6th Battalion under Sergeant Clark<sup>6</sup> attempted to enter

it from "Hilt Trench." Delayed by the heavy ground, the party was caught by machine-guns just after passing the German wire. The gallant Clark and six others were killed, and the remainder repulsed. Birdwood's artillery commander, Brigadier-General Napier, learning of this result, wrote to General White that he "felt very strongly" that, with the supply of heavy shells now almost unlimited, such loss of life on the part of the infantry should be unnecessary. He



proposed to bombard the small salient with six siege batteries for three hours and then place a barrage beyond it. The infantry would then find "nothing living in the area." The

<sup>4</sup> They had passed over their own front line (in an unoccupied waterlogged sector) without knowing it. To prevent the recurrence of this mistake, a wire was afterwards stretched across the gap. In attempting to get back, Privates G. A. Nightingale (of Queenstown, Tas.) and J. Knight (of Deloraine, Tas.) were killed and two others wounded. Corporal F. G. Nicholson (of Hobart), in charge of the party, went back for one of the wounded, and was himself killed.

<sup>5</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 269.

<sup>6</sup> Sgt. A. A. Clark (No. 774; 6th Bn.). Carpenter; of Mackay, Q'land; b. Brisbane, 19 April, 1887. Killed in action, 11 Nov., 1916.

suggestion was not adopted, possibly because it would discard the element of surprise, but plans for an attack under a sharp progressive barrage were worked out.

The intended operation, deferred through rain, was shortly to have been carried out, when on December 1st an extraordinary situation supervened. On the afternoon of that day the commander of the 14th Battalion sent the plans to his forward company commanders for their perusal. The messenger reached these officers, but, when returning with all the papers, lost his way in the sunken road, and was captured by the enemy. The officer responsible for sending forward the documents was relieved of his command; but already there had been received evidence that the Germans were impressed by the danger of continuing to hold this sharp salient ("The Nose," as they called it), and were planning to withdraw from it. The staff of the Guard Reserve Corps had long since proposed to carry this out as soon as the troops should have completed a trench farther back (the Nasen Riegel—"Nose Switch") to cover the gap. The staff of the 23rd Reserve Division were strongly opposed, as the troops liked being in this salient, where they were too close to the British lines to receive constant bombardment, but the Corps was resolute. Accordingly, the battalion on the spot was asked its opinion as to the position of the suggested switch; and the battalion forwarded a letter of inquiry—and map—to the commander of the platoon holding the salient. He sent back the papers with his objections endorsed on them; but the messenger carrying these plans lost his way, was fired at from "Goodwin's Post"<sup>7</sup> and by his own side, and finally wandered into the Australian end of the sunken road, and was captured within a few yards of the place where fourteen hours later the runner with the Australian plans walked into the Germans.

The plans of each side were thus, by an extraordinary balance of accidents, delivered to their opponents; but it is doubtful if the Australian garrison in the sector was kept fully informed. It is true they noted on December 6th that

<sup>7</sup> Goodwin's Post was in the advanced trench dug by the 3rd Battalion on the night of November 4, and afterwards abandoned. It was reoccupied soon afterwards by Lieutenant Goodwin of the 8th Battalion (the same who, as sergeant-major, had on July 25 reconnoitred Mouquet Farm).



72. AUSTRALIAN FRONT LINE ("BISCUIT TRENCH") NEAR GUEUDECOURT

Photographed on 19th December, 1916, after the improvements to the front line had begun. The officer is Lieutenant A. D. Temple, 8th Battalion. The private (J. A. Hawkins, killed in 1918) has sandbags tied round his shins. Note also his sheepskin vest; and gas mask worn in the "ready" position.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E104.*



73. A MAN OF THE 39TH BATTALION (3RD DIVISION) IN THE TRENCHES AT HOUPLINES, 8TH DECEMBER, 1916

An illustration of winter conditions in the old line near Armentières.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E84.*

*To face p. 952.*



74. INFANTRY NEAR "WILLOW SIDING," FRICOURT, ON THE WAY TO  
THE FRONT

One of the main dépôts for road-stone and other stores lay beside the railway at the right of the picture.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E148.  
Taken in January 1917.*



75. "THE SHRAPNELS"

An Australian concert party in the barn at Maricourt hired by the Australian Comforts Fund, winter of 1916-17.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E99.*

*To face p. 953.*



the enemy was shelling Fritz's Folly, but patrols, ordered to investigate, reported that the Germans were still there. The 4th Brigade was relieved that day by the 2nd, and it was not until December 10th that signs were observed that the place might be less strongly held. On the 12th Captain Taylor<sup>8</sup> of the 6th Battalion, taking Lieutenant Bill,<sup>9</sup> walked down the gun-pits road into the enemy strong-point and found it abandoned. He was joined there by Lieutenant Rogers, the battalion intelligence officer. The 6th Battalion bombers were next brought up, and the trenches and dugouts searched and before nightfall occupied. The enemy, who through the misty drizzle had seen some movement, now heavily shelled the sunken road, but inflicted only slight damage. A mine had been laid beneath the stairway of one of the dugouts, but was discovered in time.

German records show that the salient had actually been abandoned by the 101st R.I.R. early on December 6. As a precaution against the expected attack, the German artillery had kept the ground in front of it under heavy fire throughout December 3. The German records note that the Australians had not observed the evacuation up to the evening of the 6th. Actually they did not discover it until the 12th.

With the exception of a somewhat disastrous raid against Finch Trench, undertaken on December 8th by the 5th Division<sup>10</sup> without the previous consent or knowledge of the corps commander—from whom censure was incurred by the omission—this was the only active operation of the I Anzac Corps between November 16th and the close of the year. On both sides the battle was now against the conditions of winter—a campaign which at last had a chance of making headway. To give the roadmakers a better opportunity, the army commander on November 17th temporarily stopped all automobile traffic forward of Fricourt, forcing the corps

<sup>8</sup> Major C. H. Taylor, M.C.; 6th Bn. Clerk; of Kensington, Vic.; b. South Melbourne, 2 April, 1894. Died of wounds, 12 Oct., 1917.

<sup>9</sup> Lieut. A. G. Bill, Aust. Flying Corps. Surveyor and engineer; of Melbourne; b. Armadale, Vic., 16 Nov., 1892. (See Vol. VIII, p. 182.)

<sup>10</sup> A platoon of the 32nd Battalion formed the raiding party. The artillery had been unable to register the range of the trench by observation, and therefore fired only by "calculation." The result was that they fired on their own men. Lieutenant H. T. Crain (of Subiaco, W. Aust.) accordingly led his men round the edge of the barrage into the enemy trench, which they entered and searched. Several men, however, were hit by their own artillery, and twelve lost their way and were captured. Reports of the operation were tardy and inaccurate. The first news of the capture of prisoners reached the staff in the German *communiqué*.

suddenly to convert part of its horse-transport into a "siege-train" for carrying heavy shells.<sup>11</sup> Both roads and railways began, first, to fit themselves better for their functions, and then to furnish in increasing amounts the material required for improving the front. "Nissen bow huts," made of galvanised iron rolled in semicircular sheets, were forwarded in large quantities; the several brigade camps behind the ridge were completed, and from this area long pathways of duckboards were laid—two in each divisional sector and a fifth between them—over the long slope down to the front line.<sup>12</sup> These duckboard tracks were entirely open to enemy fire, and were frequently barraged with shrapnel,<sup>13</sup> but they afforded an incalculable relief to the troops; and over them at last began to come the duckboards and material for the front trenches, which thenceforth slowly improved.<sup>14</sup> The work was hampered about November 21st by a slight shifting of the Fourth Army to its right; the I Anzac Corps gave up its left sector to the 1st British Division, and took over from the Guards Division the sector next on the south, in which the forward communications were more open to the enemy and much work remained to be done.<sup>15</sup> The suffering both of men and animals was still acute. Snow on November 17th followed by a thaw produced "about the worst night . . . experienced."<sup>16</sup> But suitable apparel and heating

<sup>11</sup> For this purpose sixty general service waggons were drawn from the 4th and 5th Divisional Trains. A waggon could carry eight 9.2-inch shells.

<sup>12</sup> See Vol. XII, plates 282-3.

<sup>13</sup> Colonel A. W. Leane of the 28th was one of those killed while going along them.

<sup>14</sup> See Vol. XII, plates 284-5.

<sup>15</sup> This was followed by a great increase in the number of "trench-feet" cases, the 5th Division, which took over from the Guards, reporting 690 in the week ending on December 2—far exceeding the figures for any other division. (The 48th came next with 153, and the 29th with 152.) The excess was partly due to the fact that one brigade of Guards, instead of handing over its rubber boots, took them away with it, and partly to an onset of colder weather. The front "trenches" were in many parts only shell-holes, in which men had to sit all day, and they were unapproachable in daylight. Occupying the same trenches the previous week, the Guards Division had only 67 cases. The difference was probably due in part to better precautions taken in that division. Yet in the third week of December the Guards had 363 cases and the 20th Division 870; and, in the second week of the month, all figures for the year were surpassed by those of the 4th British Division, which, after taking over a "shell-hole" front from the French, reported 1,043 cases. About the same time the D.G.M.S. at G.H.Q. remarked that the figures for the 4th Australian Division were creditably low. The rate of sickness among Australians was, however, increased, as always, by prevalence of "childish" complaints such as mumps. Some dysentery was also occurring throughout the Somme area—probably due to troops drinking water from shell-holes in which men had at some previous time performed the offices of nature.

<sup>16</sup> From 18th Battalion war diary, November 21. The battalion was being relieved by part of the 1st British Division. "Men utterly exhausted when they arrived (at Carlton Camp). Night was foggy, and the mud was always ankle-deep—and sometimes knee-deep—all the way (about 3½ miles)."

appliances, previously asked for but often unobtainable, were now coming through. The 65,000 sheepskin jackets sent by Australia for her troops, as well as consignments of the leather waistcoats, fur jerkins, and worsted gloves used by the British; "gum" boots reaching to the thigh;<sup>17</sup> tins of solidified alcohol (known as "Tommy Cookers"), the only fuel allowed in the front line; hot-food containers, on the principle of "Thermos" flasks, in which meals could be brought hot from the "cookers" near Flers—all these formed an important part of the provision. But in addition every means that suggested itself of refreshing the men was now attempted, largely through the personal effort of General White, who had been deeply shocked by the death of his close friend General Glasfurd after a stretcher journey lasting ten hours between the front line and the advanced dressing-station.<sup>18</sup> Thus canteen stores, till then withheld by the higher authorities through shortage of transport, were forwarded to Albert;<sup>19</sup> the supply of firewood also was improved. The regimental brass bands were generally revived. In one of the nearest villages, Maricourt, a large barn was hired by the officials of the Australian Comforts Fund and concerts were arranged;<sup>20</sup> a small cinema show for the advanced camps was organised by Padre Dexter;<sup>21</sup> and a miniature newspaper, *The Rising Sun*, containing cables from Australia was circulated.<sup>22</sup> But far more welcome than any other such provision, the Comforts Fund established beside the duckwalks near Longueval a coffee-stall, at which the exhausted troops on their way into or out of the line obtained hot coffee or cocoa—served in jam-tins with the lids bent back for handles.<sup>23</sup>

While all this was the beginning of a lasting effort by the higher staff of the A.I.F., there dates also from this time

<sup>17</sup> Those reaching to the knee were useless on the Somme, the mud and water often coming in over the tops.

<sup>18</sup> On November 12 Glasfurd was wounded by a shell in "Cheese Road" (see Vol. XII, plate 271) while inspecting the line into which his brigade was about to move.

<sup>19</sup> On the day on which these stores arrived, one brigade, the 4th, purchased nearly £400 worth.

<sup>20</sup> Some of the other corps had already regularly established concert parties.

<sup>21</sup> Chaplain the Rev. W. E. Dexter, D.S.O., M.C., D.C.M. Of Montague, Vic.; b. Birkenhead, Eng., 31 Aug., 1873.

<sup>22</sup> The issue of this paper was suggested to White by Colonel W. H. Tunbridge, and it was printed on the presses of the Anzac Ammunition Park. The cabled news was obtained through the High Commissioner.

<sup>23</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 275. Pannikins would quickly have vanished.

a marked increase in the personal attention given by the younger officers to the comfort of their men. On November 11th, when "trench feet" was at its worst, Birdwood issued to the junior officers a circular stating that he had recently observed instances of lack of care for their men and appealing to every young officer

to realise that it was up to him, . . . to put all thoughts for himself, his comfort, and well-being, far in the background, and to determine that his thoughts and efforts should always be to look after his men first and foremost and sacrifice himself completely.

This reminder, though the feelings of many young officers of fine mettle were deeply hurt thereby,<sup>24</sup> was much to the benefit of the force. The realisation that the Australian soldier resented "mothering" had in many units rendered officers averse from appearing to interfere unduly in the private lives of their men. But, under conditions such as those of warfare on the Western Front, this attitude was really untenable; the only course compatible with efficiency was to take intimate care of the men whether they resented it or not. When it came to the test, they did not resent it; and the practice gradually grew stronger, with the best results for the A.I.F.

On the German side (according to the available records) until November 24 the staff still expected the British to attack Le Transloy, and indeed practised a barrage to be instantly put down on the call "Transloy" being given. But on that date it was reported from several sectors that the British were fortifying their lines with wire-entanglements. This was taken as evidence that the offensive had been abandoned, and the troops were so informed in an order issued by the Guard Reserve Corps on December 7. The German staff correctly anticipated that the British intended to renew the attack on the Somme in the spring.<sup>25</sup> The preparations anticipating that offensive will be related in the next volume. The 23rd Reserve Division (retained till the trenches in rear of Fritz's Folly were complete) was relieved by the 214th Division, but the Guard Reserve Corps was kept astride of the Bapaume road, rest being given to its troops by the attachment of the Marine Infantry Brigade. The 4th Guard Division was given the 2nd and 3rd Marine Regiments, and the 1st Guards Reserve Division the 1st Marine Regiment. Thus each battalion of the 4th Guard Division was enabled to spend three-quarters of its time out of the front line, and each battalion of the 1st Guard

<sup>24</sup> The wording of parts of this circular contrasted them with their seniors, who were probably no less responsible. Moreover, its issue naturally became known to N.C.O.'s and men, and was therefore somewhat in the nature of a reprimand inflicted on young officers in their men's presence.

<sup>25</sup> A German order to this effect was issued on 31 Dec., 1916.



Reserve Division two-thirds. To this and to the organisation of bathing, cinema shows, and other necessary recreation, these divisions attributed the maintenance of their morale during their winter service. On November 30 an order from the First Army directed the corps to destroy the British trench-railways which now obtruded themselves, and long-range guns were brought up and "shoots" carried out for that purpose.

On the Australian troops also the active measures to remedy winter conditions began slowly but surely to exercise their effect. The same diarist who had watched an exhausted Battalion trail past on November 14th<sup>26</sup> notes on December 16th:

I saw the 4th Bde., 13th Bn., coming out today looking tremendously fit and very pleased with themselves. "Put up a record in the way of health," little Locke<sup>27</sup> explained to me.

The bottom of the curve was past. The measure of the Australian mettle was this—that throughout the winter, even during the dreadful fighting of November, the I Anzac Corps functioned as smoothly as others on that front. It is true that, provided their guns or waggons were fit for any action (as they usually were), Australian artillerymen or transport drivers were averse from spending hours in ensuring that hubs and chains should be sparkling or martingales pipe-clayed. Officers of the infantry, who would untiringly train their platoons to march, manœuvre, and fight, were not insistent on the perfect cleaning of uniforms or polishing of boots. Doubtless in certain cases more care for appearance would have induced greater pride in the unit—high though that usually was—and better upkeep of material. Nevertheless a definite standard, of cleanliness rather than of neatness, was maintained. The problem was simply one of compromise between the value—for Australian morale—of neatness and that of rest. If Australian transport drivers at this period were untidy and their waggons often dirty, with broken tail-boards, their horses were strangely sleek;<sup>28</sup> and, when Australian infantry met other troops on ceremonial occasions, its accoutrements shone and it drilled like the Guards. What sustained the Australian

<sup>26</sup> See p. 941.

<sup>27</sup> Major W. J. M. Locke. The diarist adds: "Somehow I think that Durrant, their always cheerful colonel, may have given them something of his optimism . . ."

<sup>28</sup> These points were noted by the D.D. of S. T., Fourth Army, who inspected them.

divisions in these conditions was a determination that no one should hold them inferior to those around them, even though, at different times during this winter, they had the Guards on one side and a Scottish division on the other. Animated by this determination, they more than held their own throughout the winter in offence, defence, and the improvement of their area. Their works policy was as vigorous as that of any corps, their camps as clean, their roads as well kept, their railways as extensive, their trenches as strong. Their training and staff work—admittedly imperfect in 1916<sup>29</sup>—were improved. From the valley of that shadow they slowly emerged, recovering in numbers, health, and spirit, their area one of the best furnished, and their corps recognised as among the finest fighting machines at the disposal of the British command.

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<sup>29</sup> This was, however, the case with the whole British army.

## APPENDIX No. I.

### THE SOLLUM EXPEDITION

Egypt was threatened during the war not only by Turks from the east, but by Arabs from the west. The Arabs of the Libyan Desert—under the religious dominance of Sheikh el Senussi, Sayed Ahmed<sup>1</sup>—had been at war with the Italians since they turned the Turks out of Tripoli before the Great War; and, although the Senussi himself was not altogether unfriendly to Great Britain, the position became highly complicated when Italy joined the Allies. Some of the former Turkish officers had remained in the desert, and others—together with Germans—had since been put ashore by submarines. These<sup>2</sup> sought every opportunity of embroiling the Senussi with England, and, although Sir John Maxwell treated him with almost limitless patience, in November 1915 there occurred events which made war inevitable.

The western boundary of Egypt lay some 300 miles west of the Nile, but civil administration by the Egyptian Government was at this stage confined to a few stations along the Mediterranean coast



and to the nearer oases. On the coast were garrisons, chiefly of Egyptian coastguard, at El Dabaa—the head of the “Khedivial railway” (85 miles from Alexandria)—Mersa Matruh (160 miles), Sidi el Barrani (230), and Sollum (280). There were also a few minor posts. Arab troops, however, trained by Ja’far Pasha, an able Arab who had arrived from Constantinople in April, were concentrated in a threatening manner near some of these positions; and when, early in November, the British armed steamer *Tara* and horse-transport *Moorina*<sup>3</sup> were sunk by submarines in the Mediterranean and the survivors (95 Europeans and about 40 Indians) were handed over to the Senussi, who refused to release them, General Maxwell took immediate steps to meet the menace. The garrisons of Sollum, Barrani, and other advanced posts were withdrawn to Mersa Matruh, and from such forces as were available in Egypt

<sup>1</sup> Grandson of the founder of the Senussi sect, a puritan body.

<sup>2</sup> Nuri Bey, brother of Enver Pasha, was eventually given command of the Senussi’s troops.

<sup>3</sup> The *Moorina* (formerly the N.D.L. steamer *Lothringen*) was one of the ex-enemy vessels captured in Australian ports and subsequently lent by the Commonwealth to the Government of India (see Vol. IX, Appendix 6).

there was hurriedly improvised the "Western Frontier Force," which, under the command of Major-General Wallace,<sup>4</sup> was to strike back at this enemy.

Maxwell's resources consisted of only the odds and ends of troops left in Egypt during the Gallipoli fighting. He had written to Kitchener that, if the Senussi gave trouble, all that could be done was to "turn wild Australians on to him." The striking force now improvised—a brigade of cavalry and one of infantry, with one and a half batteries of guns and two aeroplanes—was mainly British. It included, however, a composite regiment of Australian light horse, consisting of squadrons from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Brigades respectively; a section of Australian signallers; and, for wheeled-transport, the train of the 1st Australian Division, whose drivers—mostly bush-bred Australians of the fine type from which this service was generally recruited—had eaten out their hearts in looking after horses and waggons at Alexandria while their comrades were fighting in Gallipoli.

The actual fighting in the ensuing campaign against the Arab regulars and their Bedouin associates has been described by an officer of the light horse as being—so far as they saw it—"more like murder" than that to which the A.I.F. was accustomed. The opposition to the infantry in some phases of the four main engagements—at Wadi Senaab, Gebel Medwa, Halazin, and Agagiya—was moderately stiff. But the real struggle of the campaign was that concerned with ensuring provision for the force over a long and exposed line of communications.<sup>5</sup> The men of the Train had therefore quite as prominent a share in it as their comrades had in the struggle of Gallipoli. At Mersa Matruh, as at Sollum, was an anchorage for ships; but, since these were dangerously exposed to submarine attacks, communication from Dabaa onwards must be largely overland. The route was through the half-desert country near the sea, generally either along the cleared track grandiloquently known as the "Khedivial Motor Road," or near the telegraph line. Inland lay the true desert.

The 1st Divisional Train, at Mex Camp under Major Holdsworth,<sup>6</sup> was on November 17th ordered to Wardian Camp. Thence, on the 29th, No. 4 Company under Major Francis<sup>7</sup> moved by rail to Dabaa, followed in the next three days by Nos. 1, 2, and 3. From Dabaa on December 4th half of No. 4 under Lieutenant Thomas<sup>8</sup> set out to march with the 15th Sikhs to Matruh, the object being to establish along the route a series of posts with supplies. Two days later the main striking force followed, accompanied by the rest of No. 4.

On this march the water in the wells at Abu Gerab was entirely consumed by the advance-guard of yeomanry, and on the second day the main body had to face a march of thirty-three miles to El Bagush

<sup>4</sup> Major-Gen. Sir A. Wallace, K.C.B. Officer of Indian Regular Army; of Fleetwood, Wellington College, Berks., Eng.; b. 22 Aug., 1858. Died 25 Dec., 1922.

<sup>5</sup> As far as Dabaa the line was guarded at first by the New Zealand Rifles; later by the 161st British Infantry Brigade.

<sup>6</sup> Col. A. A. Holdsworth, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 4th Div. Train, 1916/18. Estate agent; of Prahran, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 4 Nov., 1875.

<sup>7</sup> Lieut.-Col. F. H. Francis, D.S.O., O.B.E. Commanded 5th Div. Train, 1916/18. Tea merchant; of Lyndoch, S. Aust.; b. London, Eng., 17 July, 1876.

<sup>8</sup> Lieut. C. E. Thomas, No. 4 Coy., A.A.S.C. Public servant; of Ovingham, S. Aust.; b. Prospect, S. Aust., 15 Sept., 1889. Died of wounds, 16 Dec., 1915.



without replenishing its supply. The distress of the troops was great, but that of the animals was greater, and again and again the Australian drivers were seen pouring the contents of their precious water-bottles into plates, so as to enable their horses to keep their mouths a little moist. Throughout this march the inexperience of the staff resulted in insufficient allowance being made for the difficulties of the heavy draught-horses with their loads; but Matruh was reached on the 9th, and, the other companies following on later days, the whole train had arrived there by the 11th.

General Wallace had decided to strike the enemy at once. Accordingly, on the 11th, Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon<sup>9</sup> of the 15th Sikhs, with his own battalion, a yeomanry regiment, armoured cars, and two guns, moved out to disperse an enemy force at Duwar Hussein, sixteen miles west of Matruh. While on their way, the cavalry and guns, which were taking a separate route to southwards, were attacked and stopped. A report, however, had been sent to Matruh, and, on the arrival of a squadron of Australian light horse, the enemy was cleared out of the Wadi Senaab, losing 80 killed, against 16 killed on the British side.<sup>10</sup>

The infantry meanwhile pushed on, and camped at Um Rakhum, where, in spite of the broken nature of the road, they were joined next day by two companies of the 6th Royal Scots and No. 4 Company of the Train under Lieutenant Thomas. On December 13th the force, leaving its transport at Rakhum, started for the objective, but was almost immediately attacked by the enemy, 1,500 strong with two guns and three machine-guns. Ja'far Pasha's "regulars" operated with some skill, driving in the flank guard of Royal Scots, and the whole force was threatened with encirclement. The British official account states:

Colonel Gordon sent a helio message to the camp at Umm Rakham ordering up all reinforcements that could be spared. In reply he was informed that the machine-gun section of the Royal Scots and 75 men of the Australian A.S.C., who were armed with rifles, were being sent. The former did not arrive until the action was over, but the Australians came up in time to be of excellent service. Then at 2.15 p.m. it was reported by helio from Umm Rakham that in response to a telephone message . . . two squadrons of Australian Light Horse had come up and were escorting the two guns of the Notts Battery. Owing to the difficulty of the ground the guns came into action close to the camp, at 3.15 p.m., at long range, but a lucky shell fell in the midst of one of the largest bodies of the enemy, which scattered and disappeared.

The task which had been undertaken by the seventy-five Australians (who are described in the diary of the Force as having "turned out full of fight, with shirts and trousers and with rifles and bandoliers") was to clear out some Arabs who, by occupying certain wadis, were cutting off part of the 15th Sikhs. Lieutenant Thomas divided his men into three parties under himself, Lieutenant McQuie,<sup>11</sup> and the transport officer of the Royal Scots. A machine-gun of the Royal Scots was to cover the attack. Seeing the limber with the ammunition for this gun stuck fast in a dangerous position, Thomas most gallantly seized two mules and led them to it across the open. As he was putting them in, he fell mortally wounded.

<sup>9</sup> Brig.-Gen. J. L. R. Gordon, C.B., C.S.I.; 15th Sikhs. Officer of Indian Regular Army; of Elgin, Morayshire, Scotland; b. Colombo, Ceylon, 17 Nov., 1867.

<sup>10</sup> These included Lieut.-Colonel C. L. Snow, an officer well known in that desert, who was shot while trying to save a wounded Bedouin.

<sup>11</sup> Major L. F. McQuie, 1st Div. Train. Of Mildura, Vic.; b. 25 Aug., 1892.

The attack of the left party would now have hung fire had not Sergeant Saunders<sup>12</sup> taken the initiative and cleared the gully of Arabs, afterwards rejoining the other parties, which, though almost entirely untrained for such work, had accomplished it in a highly creditable fashion. They lost, besides Lieutenant Thomas, one man killed and five wounded. The appearance of the light horse on the enemy's flank completed his repulse. The Arab casualties totalled about 125 men, against 65 British; but the affair was indecisive, and the troops were next day withdrawn to Matruh.<sup>13</sup>

It now became evident that Mersa Matruh camp might be attacked. While fresh stores were being landed from steamers—now available—the camp was prepared for defence.<sup>14</sup> On Christmas day, the weather becoming favourable, an attempt was made to crush the enemy by striking at his position at Gebel Medwa, in broken country six miles south-west of Matruh. The striking force, some 2,500 strong, left Matruh early in the morning and was in action by seven o'clock. By midday the infantry (which included the 1st Battalion, New Zealand Rifle Brigade) had driven in the enemy, and an opportunity arose for the cavalry, which had made a long détour to the south, to cut off his retreat and possibly at one blow finish the campaign. The cavalry force, of which the Australian light horse guided by Lieutenant Beck<sup>15</sup> formed the advance-guard, had met with little resistance. At sunrise the leading squadron under Major Bisdee, encountering some badly mounted and badly armed Arab cavalry, had deployed at the gallop, and, with the assistance of "A" Battery, H.A.C., easily dispersed them. The artillery shot extremely well, and the Australians without any difficulty dislodged their opponents from farther positions also. Major Pelham,<sup>16</sup> who commanded the composite light horse regiment, now asked for permission to cut off the retreat of the enemy's main force, which could be seen escaping near the coast; but, in spite of urgent messages from the commander of the main British column, the commander of the cavalry force considered the task too difficult for his troops, and the opportunity was missed.<sup>17</sup> The light horse lost only one man killed, and half-a-dozen wounded. The total British loss was 64; the Arabs are said to have lost 300 killed. But the action was nevertheless indecisive, and the force was withdrawn to Matruh. On December 28th another sortie was made by a small mixed force to clear a body of Arabs reported to be at Bir Haswa threatening the communications with Dabaa. Insufficient precautions, however, were taken to ensure surprise, and the camps were next day found to be deserted; but a number of camels and sheep were seized and a store of grain destroyed.

<sup>12</sup> Capt. F. V. Saunders, O.B.E.; 1st Div. Train. Bank clerk; of Bathurst, N.S.W.; b. Stanmore, N.S.W., 3 May, 1892.

<sup>13</sup> Major Holdsworth had now been appointed A.D. of S. & T. on General Wallace's staff, and Major Francis therefore commanded the Train.

<sup>14</sup> Some of the outer line of picquet posts were on certain occasions held by men of the Train.

<sup>15</sup> Capt. W. Beck, 12th L.H. Regt. Farmer and grazier; of Candelo, N.S.W.; b. 4 Nov., 1875.

<sup>16</sup> Major Hon. D. R. H. Pelham, D.S.O.; 10th Hussars. Of Newark, Notts., Eng.; b. 5 July, 1872.

<sup>17</sup> Pelham appears to have made this request personally, and later to have sent Lieutenant D. V. Hannay (of Toowoomba, Q'land) with a message urging that it should be granted.

With the new year there set in the heavy rains, which are normal along that coast during the winter. This prevented further excursions until January 12th, when a mixed column, including the whole of the Australian transport, moved out, in the same direction as on the last occasion, to destroy a camp at Gebel Howeimil. The light horse, as it generally did, formed the advance-guard. It was found that the Arab "regulars" had been by then withdrawn, but the column burned some smaller camps and brought in many camels and sheep and a few Bedouin. On this day the cavalry marched fifty miles.

The reorganisation of the A.I.F. was now beginning, and on January 15th two squadrons of the composite light horse regiment left this column to return to Egypt. The return of British troops from Gallipoli had, however, set free a force ample for Sir John Maxwell's purposes, and he now decided to reoccupy Sollum. While help from the navy was being arranged, parts of the 2nd Mounted and South African Infantry Brigades reached Matruh, and with these on January 24th General Wallace determined to attack the Senussi's main camp—located by an aeroplane at Halazin, twenty-two miles south-west of Matruh. As before, he attacked with two columns. The enemy outflanked both, and, though a reserve squadron (Australian light horse) was sent up in support, the cavalry was forced to withdraw. However, the infantry (which also was reinforced by some light horse) broke through the enemy's centre, and the Arabs thereupon retreated. The British casualties were 312 (though only 21 were killed); those of the enemy were estimated at 200 killed and 500 wounded. The 1st Australian Divisional Train, which had accompanied this sortie, had by midday on the 23rd stuck fast in the rain-sodden ground.<sup>18</sup> The waggons were formed into a "laager" for the night, and next day pushed on to meet the returning column, feed it, and help to clear the wounded.<sup>19</sup> The effort was very exhausting, and the transport received the thanks of General Wallace.

Preparations for the final advance on Sollum were now made. On February 10th Major-General Peyton<sup>20</sup> took command; camel transport had arrived; and on the 13th the 1st New Zealand Rifle Battalion, with two guns and some cavalry, escorted a large camel convoy sent forward to establish an advanced base forty miles to the west at Umjeila. On the 18th the wheeled transport—128 waggons<sup>21</sup>—followed, escorted by the 2nd Battalion, South African Infantry.<sup>22</sup> Numbers of Arabs, who were by now starving, surrendered to the column. By the 22nd the South African Infantry Brigade had

<sup>18</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 574. After progressing one mile in three hours, Major Francis spread the train on a wide front, and managed to advance a further four miles by 2 p.m.

<sup>19</sup> See *Vol. XII*, plate 573.

<sup>20</sup> Gen. Sir W. E. Peyton, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., p.s.c. Commanded 2nd Mounted Div., 1914/16; Western Frontier Force, 1916; Military Secretary, British Armies in France, 1916/18; commanded 40th Div., 1918/19. Officer of British Regular Army; of Edinburgh, Scotland; b. 7 May, 1866.

<sup>21</sup> Of these, 80 general service waggons (with 3,000-lb. loads) carried fodder for animals.

<sup>22</sup> On this march the force had recourse to the underground cisterns built by the Romans and ever since used by the nomads.

reached Umjeila, and on the 23rd its commander, Brigadier-General Lukin,<sup>23</sup> moved against the enemy at Agagiya, fifteen miles south of Barrani. Three days later he attacked. The South Africans drove the Arabs from their position, but the affair might have been as indecisive as the rest had not the Dorset Yeomanry, seeing the enemy in retreat, charged his rear-guard, and, in spite of considerable loss,<sup>24</sup> turned the retreat into a rout and captured Ja'far Pasha.

This ended the serious fighting. Barrani was occupied on February 28th and Sollum on March 14th. Among other units, the 1st Company of the newly-formed Australian Camel Corps<sup>25</sup> had now joined the force, and was thrust out to Bir Waer. The survivors of the *Tara*, encamped at Bir Hakkim, 120 miles west of Sollum, were released on March 17th by a brilliant dash of light armoured cars and motor ambulances under the Duke of Westminster.<sup>26</sup> Already, on March 7th, the 1st Division's train, after making two more journeys from Matruh to Umjeila, had left Matruh for Cairo, where it was urgently required<sup>27</sup> for building up the army service companies of the reorganised A.I.F. It had kept its animals in splendid fettle throughout, and General Peyton thanked it for its work.

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<sup>23</sup> Major-Gen. Sir H. T. Lukin, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. Commanded successively, during Great War, South African Inf. Bde. and 9th and 64th British Divisions. Officer of South African Permanent Forces; of Pretoria, S. Africa; b. 24 May, 1860. Died 16 Dec., 1925.

<sup>24</sup> Five officers and 27 men were killed.

<sup>25</sup> Later absorbed in the Imperial Camel Corps; see p. 180n, and Vol. VII, p. 211.

<sup>26</sup> Major the Duke of Westminster, G.C.V.O., D.S.O.; Cheshire Yeomanry. Of Eaton Hall, Chester, Eng.; b. 19 March, 1879.

<sup>27</sup> Lieut.-Colonel J. T. Marsh was sent to Dabaa to hasten its return.



## APPENDIX No. 2.

### THE LIGHT CARS IN THE LIBYAN DESERT

Although the main force of the Senussi had been beaten in the Sollum campaign, the Nile valley farther south continued to be threatened by congregations of tribesmen in the neighbouring oases. There is said to be evidence that not only the Senussi, but the Sultan of Darfur and possibly the Turks were working upon a concerted plan. It thus became necessary to safeguard the western edge of the Nile valley. The part played in this by the light horse and the Imperial Camel Corps has been mentioned in *Volume VII*.<sup>1</sup>

The British Official History<sup>2</sup> states:

The Imperial Camel Corps (which, the authors say, "was predominantly Australian") was the backbone of the defence of Egypt from the west. But the use of camelry in war is ancient, and it was the internal-combustion engine which now completely altered the situation.

The reference is to the motor-car patrols,<sup>3</sup> which were of two types—light car patrols of Ford cars, and light armoured motor batteries of Rolls Royce cars and tenders. It was to this service that Murray sent the Australian light-car patrol,<sup>4</sup> which arrived in Egypt in the middle of 1916. This unit consisted of three armoured cars of the heavier type, armed with Colt guns; the bodies had been built by the members of the unit themselves in Melbourne to the plans of their commander, Captain James.<sup>5</sup> On August 15th they were sent from Ismailia to Minia, from which point, working with the 11th and 12th British Light Armoured Car Batteries, they patrolled the line of blockhouses to the Baharia oasis,<sup>6</sup> which in October was re-occupied by a force under Major-General Watson.<sup>7</sup> The Colt guns of the Australian cars worked well enough, but, though all the drivers were accustomed to bush driving in Australia, their cars proved much more difficult



<sup>1</sup> Pages 211, 212, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Military Operations Egypt and Palestine, Vol. I, pp. 137-8.*

<sup>3</sup> Aeroplanes also proved to be of enormous assistance in desert warfare.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> Capt E. H. James, M.V.O., M.C., V.D.; 1st Aust. Armoured Car Section. Engineer; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Melbourne, 22 Nov., 1879.

<sup>6</sup> Movement of Arabs was checked by keeping a look-out for fresh footmarks, which, when seen, were always followed up.

<sup>7</sup> Major-Gen. W. A. Watson, C.B., C.M.G., C.I.E., p.s.c.; 39th (K.G.O.) Central India Horse. Officer of Indian Regular Army; of Finchampstead, Berkshire, Eng.; b. Delhi, India, 25 Sept., 1860.

to work in sand than the British Rolls Royces.<sup>8</sup> Apart from the possibility of breakdown in the desert—to which both cars and aeroplanes were liable—there was no great danger in the work.<sup>9</sup>

On December 3rd the unit was ordered south. Its cars and guns were returned to Cairo, but the personnel went by railway to the Kharga oasis, which the British had re-occupied in April. Here cars and Lewis guns were taken over from a British unit. Extra drivers and some despatch riders (with motor-cycles) joined, and the unit became No. 1 Australian Light Car Patrol. Its first duty was to escort General Watson to the Dakhla oasis (reoccupied since October, 1916). At the end of the year the unit was employed in discovering new routes from the southern end of that oasis to Kharga, the ancient track (Darb el Gubari) being too flinty for tyres. A more southerly route was soon found—leading through a pass in some rocky hills,<sup>10</sup> beyond which was firm sand allowing motors to travel at high speed to Kharga, which was their goal.

Meanwhile, all the important oases had been re-occupied except Siwa, where the Senussi himself was located. Hearing that he proposed to withdraw thence to Jaghbul, Sir Archibald Murray decided to raid Siwa from Matruh. This was done at the beginning of February, 1917, but the Senussi escaped. It was while these plans were in preparation that the Australian patrol, then at Dakhla, was asked to discover a route from Dakhla direct to the Kufra oasis, 400 miles to the west in the centre of the desert. The oasis had never been approached from this direction, access having always been from Cyrenaica in the north. Three cars started, with two despatch-riders. But the surface was found to be soft drift-sand; the cars had to be worked in low gear and constantly pushed.<sup>11</sup> One broke down at the 80th mile, and a second when nearing the 200th. The country ahead, seen from a high hill, showed no sign of improvement, and the attempt was therefore abandoned. The patrol returned to Dakhla oasis just as its last water-can was emptied.<sup>12</sup> A second attempt was about to be made when the unit was sent to Palestine.<sup>13</sup> The British, who were now raiding the Senussi's camps from the

<sup>8</sup> The difficulty was partly met by discarding some of the armour and unnecessary parts, and by fitting twin tyres to the rear wheels. The cars always worked in pairs, so as to have labour available when the going was bad.

<sup>9</sup> On September 6 the Arabs surprised and shot two British officers who were out with a car near the Baharia oasis. The chief danger, however, is typified by the fate of two British airmen whose aeroplane was forced in July to land in the desert. Lieutenant R. W. Creswell (of Melbourne), second-in-command of a company of the camel corps, made a gallant dash from Kharga into the desert to recover it. The pilot and observer were found dead, but the machine was brought back.

<sup>10</sup> These hills were east of the ancient caravan route from Dakhla to the wells of El Sheb. The cars were guided mainly by compass, although these were affected by the magnetos. Frequent checks had to be made. To mark the routes, cairns were built and capped with empty petrol-tins, the shining sides of which could sometimes be seen for twenty miles.

<sup>11</sup> It was found that, by keeping the two following cars in the wheel-tracks of the leader, they could be driven on top gear. To save weight, the car-bodies had been removed, and, to save water, only one car carried its Lewis gun. Condensers were fitted to the radiators.

<sup>12</sup> One car had to be temporarily abandoned, but was recovered a week later.

<sup>13</sup> Its subsequent history is referred to in *Vol. VII* of this series.

north in conjunction with the Italians,<sup>14</sup> and destroying his ammunition, in April, 1917, made terms with Sayed Idris, the Senussi's cousin (and son of his predecessor). This leader was now recognised as occupying the Senussi's position; Sayed Ahmed himself was in August, 1918, smuggled by an Austrian submarine to Constantinople, where he for a time took a prominent part in the Pan-Islamic movement.

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<sup>14</sup> Some of the camel corps took part.

# COLOUR PATCHES



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# COLOUR PATCHES

OF THE

## AUSTRALIAN FORCES,

1914 - 1918.

The charts show the system on which these colour patches were designed, whereby anyone knowing (1) the basic shapes (indicating division or service), (2) lower colours (usually denoting brigade), and (3) upper colours (usually denoting unit) could at a glance determine to what unit the wearer belonged. The three irregularities in the case of the infantry are marked with asterisks.

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# INFANTRY

**BATTALION**  
*Upper colour*

**BRIGADE**

*Lower colour*

**NEW SOUTH WALES**

*usually*

**GREEN**

**BRIGADE**

*Lower colour*

**VICTORIA**

*usually*

**RED**

**BRIGADE**

*Lower colour*

**QUEENSLAND TASMANIA  
SOUTH AUST WEST AUST**

*usually*

**LIGHT BLUE**

**DIVISION**

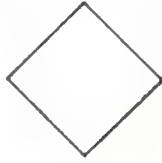
*Shape of*

*patch*

**FIRST**



**SECOND**



**THIRD**



black *1<sup>st</sup> Bn in Bde*  
purple *2<sup>nd</sup> Bn in Bde*  
brown *3<sup>rd</sup> Bn in Bde*  
white *4<sup>th</sup> Bn in Bde*

black *1<sup>st</sup> Bn in Bde*  
purple *2<sup>nd</sup> Bn in Bde*  
brown *3<sup>rd</sup> Bn in Bde*  
white *4<sup>th</sup> Bn in Bde*

black *1<sup>st</sup> Bn in Bde*  
purple *2<sup>nd</sup> Bn in Bde*  
brown *3<sup>rd</sup> Bn in Bde*  
white *4<sup>th</sup> Bn in Bde*

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Bde HQ</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Bde HQ</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Bde HQ</b>	<b>LTM Bty</b>
<b>1 Bn</b>	<b>5 Bn</b>	<b>9 Bn</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2 Bn</b>	<b>6 Bn</b>	<b>10 Bn</b>	
<b>3 Bn</b>	<b>7 Bn</b>	<b>11 Bn</b>	
<b>4 Bn</b>	<b>8 Bn</b>	<b>12 Bn</b>	
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Bde HQ</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> Bde HQ</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> Bde HQ</b>	<b>LTM Bty</b>
<b>17 Bn</b>	<b>21 Bn</b>	<b>25 Bn</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>18 Bn</b>	<b>22 Bn</b>	<b>26 Bn</b>	
<b>19 Bn</b>	<b>23 Bn</b>	<b>27 Bn</b>	
<b>20 Bn</b>	<b>24 Bn</b>	<b>28 Bn</b>	
<b>9<sup>th</sup> Bde HQ</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> Bde HQ</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> Bde HQ</b>	<b>LTM Bty</b>
<b>33 Bn</b>	<b>37 Bn</b>	<b>41 Bn</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>34 Bn</b>	<b>38 Bn</b>	<b>42 Bn</b>	
<b>35 Bn</b>	<b>39 Bn</b>	<b>43 Bn</b>	
<b>36 Bn</b>	<b>40 Bn</b>	<b>44 Bn</b>	



# DIVISIONAL UNITS

## CANCELLED

Medium  
T M

Fld  
Arty Btys

MG  
Bns

Pnr  
Engrs Bns

Sigs  
AMC Corps

Vet  
Corps

ASC  
Ordnance Corps

Pay  
Corps

Mtd  
Cyc Supply Amm  
Tps Coys Cols  
Parks





# LIGHT HORSE

## BRIGADES (Lower Colour)

REGIMENT (Upper Colour)	1 Bde	2 Bde	3 Bde	4 Bde	5 Bde
light blue					
1 <sup>st</sup> Regt in Bde					
2 <sup>nd</sup> Regt in Bde					
3 <sup>rd</sup> Regt in Bde					
Machine Gun Squadrons					
Field Ambulances					
Mobile Veterinary Sects					
Camel Corps					
Armoured Car Bty					
ASC					
Remount Sect					
RHA (attached)					

## CANCELLED

## MEDICAL

## ENGINEERS & SIGNALS

Camel Corps					
Armoured Car Bty					
ASC					
Remount Sect					
RHA (attached)					
Camel Corps AMC					
6 San Sect					
7 San Sect					
8 San Sect					
4 Regt					
11 Regt					
12 Regt					
Sig Service					
Fid Sqdn					
ASC					
Remount Units N°1					
N°2					

# CORPS. ARMY. ETC. UNITS

## FLYING CORPS

All units



## ARTILLERY

3 (Army) Bde



6 (Army) Bde



12 (Army) Bde



(Army) Signals



36 Heavy Arty Group



Heavy T MBty



(Army) Bde Amm Sects



Corps Amm Parks



Mining Corps



Corps Troops Sup Col



"K" Supply Col



## ENGINEERS

Corps Signals



Topographical Sect



Tunnelling Coys



1 Army Troops Coy



E & M M & B Coy



Railway  
Operating Coys



light  
broad gauge



## WIRELESS SECTION

C A N C E L L E D

## TRANSPORT & SUPPLY

Corps Mech Tpt Col



Mech Tpt



Coys



Railhead Sup Detach



Sea Tpt Service



## MOUNTED TROOPS

Aust Corps (previously I Anzac Corps)



Mtd Regt



Cyc Bn

XXII Corps (previously II Anzac Corps)



Mtd Regt



Cyc Bn



# MEDICAL

General Hospitals	1		2		3		14		Nurses { Salonika India unallotted
Stationary Hospitals	1		2						
Auxiliary Hospitals	1		2		3				
Casualty Clearing Stns	1		2		3				Dental Corps
Hospital Ships	1		2						Dermatological Hosp
Sea Transport Sect					Staff N°1		Staff N°4		SANITARY SECTION

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Admin HQ Med Sect		Pay Corps		Special Duty				
Corps HQ		Veterinary Evac Stn		NAVAL AND MILITARY EXPEDITIONARY FORCE				
<u>CANCELLED</u>		Veterinary Hosp		Infantry		Medical		
AIF Admin HQ		Motor Tpt Service						





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relieves 1 and 2 Bns., 25-26 July, 586, casualties, 593n; in attack of 18-19 Aug. near Mouquet Farm, 783-4, 785-6; casualties, 15-21 Aug., 787n. **8th Battalion** (Vic.), 42, 49, 249n, 327n, 532, 548n, 551, 552n, 569, 578, 579, 585, 586, 588, 589, 590, 592, 781, 782, 883, (plate) 952, 952n; at Pozières: attacks, 23 July, 537, 538-9, 544, 545, plans for advance beyond village, 570-1, the advance, 25 July, 571-5, casualties, 593n; in attack of 18-19 Aug. near Mouquet Farm, 783, 785, 786; casualties, 15-21 Aug., 787n. **9th Battalion** (Q'land), 26, 42, 49, 136, 138-9, 140n, 210, 213, 281, 473, 482n, 483, 496-7, 524, 559n, 562, 598n, 793, 800n, 809, 890; raids German trenches near Fleurbaix, 1-2 July, 273-80; at Pozières: enters line, 20 July, 479, attacks Pozières Trench, 22 July, 489-90, renews attack, 23 July, 499-502, 503-4, 507 *et seq.*, 516, 517; in attack on O.G. Lines, 25 July, 565, 17 Bn. relieves, 25-26 July, 586, casualties, 593n; enters line near Mouquet Farm, 19 Aug., 791, during 3 Bde's thrust towards Farm, 21-22 Aug., 796, 798, casualties, 802n. **10th Battalion** (S. Aust.), 42, 49, 118n, 243n, 517, 524, 559n, 592n, 793, 794; at Pozières: attacks, 23 July, 504, 506-7, 510-3, 545, assists 5 and 7 Bns. in attack on O.G. Lines, 25 July, 558, 561-2, 564-6, 18 Bn. relieves, 25-26 July, 586, casualties, 593n; enters line near Mouquet Farm, 19 Aug., 792, attacks 21-22 Aug., 795-8, 799, 800-1, casualties, 802n. **11th Battalion** (W. Aust.), 42, 49, 126, 135, 216, 496, 497, 502n, 551, 552, 553, 560, 569, 570, 579, 582n, 585, 586n, 618, 708, 764, 792, 798, 869n, 886n, 890; Germans raid, near Cordonnerie, 30 May, 210-7, casualties, 212; raids German trenches, near Cordonnerie, 2-3 July, 281; at Pozières: enters line, 20 July, 479, attacks, 23 July, 498-9, 503-4, 507, 508, 509, 516, 517, 534, 539-40, 542, casualties, 593n; attacks near Mouquet Farm, 21-22 Aug., 795, 796, 800, 801, casualties, 802n. **12th Battalion** (S. Aust., W. Aust., Tas.), 42, 48, 49, 515, 516, 517, 523, 551, 575, 579, 581, 585, 587, 588n, 618, 890, 951; at Pozières: attacks, 23 July, 506-9, 513, 539, 540-2, 545, 25 July, 568-9, 19 Bn. relieves, 586, casualties, 593n; enters line near Mouquet Farm, 19 Aug., 791-2, attacks, 21-22 Aug., 795-7, 798-800, 801, casualties, 802n, 24 Bn. relieves, 22-23 Aug., 806. **13th Battalion** (N.S.W.), 42, 48, 49, 73n, 292, 300, 661n, 735n, 738, 747, 749, 750, 751n, 753, 757, 758, 761, 763, 774n, 882, 957; relieves 15 Bn., 10 Aug., 744; advances up O.G. Lines, 11 Aug., 745-6; in thrust towards Mouquet Farm, 12-13 Aug., 756;

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attacks near Farm, 14-15 Aug., 766-9; casualties, 7-15 Aug., 770; relieves 15 Bn., 28 Aug., 828; attacks Mouquet Farm, 29-30 Aug., 829-32, 835, casualties, 835. **14th Battalion** (Vic.), 42, 49, 599, 735n, 792n, 838, 944n, 952; raids German trenches near La Houssoie, 2-3 July, 283, 300-2; Germans raid, 3 July, 303-4; at Pozières: relieves part of 7 Bde., 6 Aug., 714, meets German counter-attack, 7 Aug., 717-20, casualties, 5-7 Aug., 723, recaptures Park Lane, 10 Aug., 741-2, 49 Bn. relieves, 13-14 Aug., 759, casualties, 5-15 Aug., 770n; relieves 21 and 22 Bns., 26 Aug., 823; attacks at Mouquet Farm, 27-28 Aug., 824-7, casualties, 827; 16 Bn. relieves, 28 Aug., 828. **15th Battalion** (Q'land, Tas.), 42, 49, 714, 743, 803n, 838, 839n, 882, 885; at Pozières: relieves 6 Bde., 5-6 Aug., 709, meets German counter-attack, 7 Aug., 715-6, 719, plans for attack on Park Lane, 8-9 Aug., 734-5, captures Park Lane, 735-8, withdraws, 9 Aug., 738, recaptures Park Lane, 10 Aug., 741, 13 Bn. relieves, 744, casualties, 5-15 Aug., 770n; relieves 23 and 24 Bns., 26 Aug., 823n; 13 Bn. relieves, 28 Aug., 828. **16th Battalion** (S. Aust., W. Aust.), 42, 49, 291, 737, 743, 744, 747 et seq., 836, 882, 883; leaves Tel el Kebir for Suez Canal, Mar., 288n; at Pozières: plans for attack of 10 Aug., 740-1, captures Point, 78, 741, objectives of 11 Aug., 745, attacks, 11 Aug., 746, 50 Bn. relieves, 12 Aug., 752, casualties, 5-15 Aug., 770n; relieves 14 Bn. near Mouquet Farm, 28 Aug., 828; attacks the Farm, 29-30 Aug., 829-30, 832-5, casualties, 835. **17th Battalion** (N.S.W.), 42, 135, 139, 261, 588, 608, 624, 642, 920, 927; German artillery destroys billet of, at La Rolanderie, (plate) 72; at Pozières: relieves 9 Bn., 25-26 July, 586, its bomb fight in Munster Alley, 26-27 July, 609-13, attacks O.G. Lines, 29 July, 629, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724n. **18th Battalion** (N.S.W.), 23-4, 26, 30, 136, 141, 142, 195, 200, 592n, 622, 644, 654, 672, 711, 883, 919, 921, 927, 954n; command, 662; 20 Bn. relieves, at Le Bridoux, 1 May, 195; raids German trenches near Bois Grenier, 26-27 June, 263-5; at Pozières: relieves 10 Bn., 25-26 July, 586, in Munster Alley bomb fight, 26-27 July, 610, 611-2, attacks O.G. Lines, 4-5 Aug., 674-6, 690n, 698, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724n. **19th Battalion** (N.S.W.), 134, 303, 581, 613-4, 616, 617, 618, 619, 622, 662, 666, 884, 927, 938, 940n; at Pozières: relieves 12 Bn., 25-26 July, 586, in Munster Alley bomb fight, 26-27 July, 610, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724n; attacks The Maze, 14-15

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Nov., 929-31, 933-4, 28 Bn. relieves, 15 Nov., 935, casualties, 937n. **20th Battalion** (N.S.W.), 42, 138, 586, 607, 624, 630, 672, 698n, 886n, 919, 927; relieves 18 Bn. at Le Bridoux, 1 May, 195; asks for Stokes guns, 195-6; Germans raid, 5 May, and capture Stokes guns, 198-207, stubbornness of defence not fully recognised, 214, 215, 217-8, casualties, 200, 202, 203, German account, 204-5; casualties, at Le Bridoux, 14 June, 210n; at Pozières: attacks O.G. Lines, 26 July, 587-8, in Munster Alley bomb fight, 26-27 July, 610, attacks O.G. Lines, 29 July, 627, 629, and 4-5 Aug., 674-6, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724n; attacks The Maze, 14-15 Nov., 929-31, 932, casualties, 937n. **21st Battalion** (Vic.), 42, 134, 615, 616, 617, 623n, 807-8, 809, 822, 824, 833, 872n, 918, 932, 937n; relieves 10 Lines., 7 Apr., 113; covers 6 Bde's raid near Armentières, 29-30 June, 267; at Pozières: relieves 22 and 23 Bns., 29-30 July, 656-7, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724n; strength, 22 Aug., 805n; attacks Mouquet Farm, 26 Aug., 810-5, 816-21, casualties, 821; 14 Bn. relieves, 26 Aug., 823. **22nd Battalion** (Vic.), 604n, 614, 618, 623, 656, 702n, 703, 808n; in joint raid near Armentières, 29-30 June, 267-71; at Pozières: enters line, 25-26 July, 617, attacks Brind's Road, 29 July, 638-9, O.G. Lines, 4-5 Aug., 672, 673, 682-6, 687, 689, 691, 693, 695-6, 697, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724n; strength, 22 Aug., 805n; its rôle during attack on Mouquet Farm, 26 Aug., 810, 815-6, 819-21; 14 Bn. relieves, 26 Aug., 823. **23rd Battalion** (Vic.), 88, 218n, 617, 623, 640n, 646n, 656, 668n, 673, 736n; command, 683n; enters line in Fleurbaix sector, 10 Apr., 113; in joint raid near Armentières, 29-30 June, 267-71; at Pozières: attacks Brind's Road, 29 July, 627, 637-9, preparations for assault on O.G. Lines, 4-5 Aug., 657-61, attacks, 4-5 Aug., 686-7, 697, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724n; strength, 22 Aug., 805n; 15 Bn. relieves, 26 Aug., 823n. **24th Battalion** (Vic.), 42, 69, 88, 218n, 614, 618, 623, 661, 703, 705n, 807-8, 809, 918, 937n, 941; in joint raid near Armentières, 29-30 June, 267-71; at Pozières: enters line, 25-26 July, 617; during attack of 4-5 Aug., 686, 697, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724n; strength, 22 Aug., 805n; relieves 12 Bn., 22-23 Aug., 806; attacks Mouquet Farm, 26 Aug., 810-4, 817-8; 15 Bn. relieves, 26 Aug., 823n; attacks The Maze, 14-15 Nov., 932-3, 934. **25th Battalion** (Q'land), 42, 190, 191n, 257n, 326n, 327n, 602, 624, 632n, 646, 705, 707n, 708, 909, 910-1, 912, 915, 918, 927, 940; command, 76, 666;



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arrives in France, 19 *Mar.*, 71, 76, 78; in joint raid near Ontario Farm, 28-29 *June*, 266-7; at Pozières: attacks O.G. Lines, 29 *July*, 627, 630-1, 633-6, 638, (casualties) 643, preparations for attack of 4-5 *Aug.*, 666-7, attacks O.G. Lines, 4-5 *Aug.*, 677 *et seq.*, 690n, 691, 693, 694, casualties, 25 *July*-7 *Aug.*, 724n; attacks The Maze, 14-15 *Nov.*, 928 *et seq.*, casualties, 937n.

**26th Battalion** (*Q'land, Tas.*), 602, 624, 646, 674n, 703, 705, 709n, 711, 714, 722n, 909, 915n, 927, 940; arrives in France, 78; in joint raid near Armentières, 6 *June*, 243-51; at Pozières: attacks O.G. Lines, 29 *July*, 627, 630-1, 633-6, 638, (casualties) 643, preparations for attack of 4-5 *Aug.*, 665, attacks O.G. Lines, 4-5 *Aug.*, 677, 678-80, 682, 690n, 691, 693, 695, during German counter-attack, 7 *Aug.*, 717, casualties, 25 *July*-7 *Aug.*, 724n; attacks The Maze, 5 *Nov.*, 911-2, 14-15 *Nov.*, 928-9, 931, 932, 934-5, casualties, 14-15 *Nov.*, 937n.

**27th Battalion** (*S. Aust.*), 257n, 326n, 327, 602, 624, 672, 674n, 703, 704-5, 886, 915n, 918, 920, 935; arrives in France, 78; relieves North'd Fus., 7 *Apr.*, 113; in joint raid near Ontario Farm, 28-29 *June*, 266-7; at Pozières: preparations for 4-5 *Aug.* attack, 663-4, 665, attacks O.G. Lines, 4-5 *Aug.*, 677-8, 679, 680-1, 690n, 691, 693, 694-5, 48 Bn. relieves, 5-6 *Aug.*, 707-13, casualties, 25 *July*-7 *Aug.*, 724n; attacks The Maze, 5 *Nov.*, 911-4.

**28th Battalion** (*W. Aust.*), 42, 134, 326n, 602, 603, 624, 626, 634, 646n, 672, 703 *et seq.*, 885, 914, 915n, 937, 954n; arrives in France, 78; relieves North'd Fus., 7 *Apr.*, 113; in joint raid near Armentières, 6 *June*, 243-51; at Pozières: attacks O.G. Lines, 29 *July*, 627, 630-3, 637, (casualties) 643, preparations for 4-5 *Aug.* attack, 664, attacks O.G. Lines, 4-5 *Aug.*, 682, 694-5, withdraws from O.G. Lines, 5 *Aug.*, 704, casualties, 25 *July*-7 *Aug.*, 724n; attacks The Maze, 5 *Nov.*, 911-2; relieves 15 Bn., 15 *Nov.*, 935.

**29th Battalion** (*Vict.*), 42, 335n, 352, 353n, 438, 884; at Battle of Fromelles, 397, during German counter-attack, 401, 412, 414, 422, 423, casualties, 442n.

**30th Battalion** (*N.S.W.*), 341n, 352, 353n, 438, 881, 882; at Battle of Fromelles, 382, 383, 385-6, 388n, 397n, 445n, during German counter-attack, 401, 402, 409-11, 412, 414, 424-6, trench dug across No-Man's Land by, (plate) 413, casualties, 442n.

**31st Battalion** (*Q'land, Vic.*), 3, 344n, 352, 353, 355, 370n, 375n, 408, 427, 886, 901n; at Battle of Fromelles, 362, 372-4, 376-80, 384, 388, during German counter-attack, 400, 402, 411 *et seq.*, 421-4, withdraws to Aust. lines, 428-9, casualties, 442.

## AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE—continued.

**32nd Battalion** (*S. Aust., W. Aust.*), 42, 352, 353, 381n, 408, 425n, 427, 953n; command, 447n; at Battle of Fromelles, 362, 372-3, 375-6, 379, 384, 387, during German counter-attack, 398, 400-2, 410n, 411 *et seq.*, 421-4, 426, withdraws to Aust. lines, 428, casualties, 441-2.

**33rd Battalion** (*N.S.W.*), 950n.

**34th Battalion** (*N.S.W.*), 950n.

**45th Battalion** (*N.S.W.*), 48, 49, 707, 711n, 714, 721, 722, 829n, 878n, 886; at Pozières: relieves 5 Bde., 5-6 *Aug.*, 707, casualties from shell-fire, 5-7 *Aug.*, 723, casualties, 5-15 *Aug.*, 770n.

**46th Battalion** (*Vict.*), 42, 49, 673n, 691n, 707, 746n, 753-4, 829n, 883; at Pozières: casualties, 5-15 *Aug.*, 770n.

**47th Battalion** (*Q'land, Tas.*), 42, 49, 707, 839, 883; at Pozières: relieves 48 Bn., 720, casualties, 5-15 *Aug.*, 770n.

**48th Battalion** (*S. Aust., W. Aust.*), 42, 49, 714, 839n, 886; command, 47; the "Joan of Arc" Battalion, 708; at Pozières: relieves 27 Bn., 5-6 *Aug.*, 707-13, meets German counter-attack, 7 *Aug.*, 716-20, 47 Bn. relieves, 7 *Aug.*, 720, casualties, 5-7 *Aug.*, 723, casualties, 5-15 *Aug.*, 770n.

**49th Battalion** (*Q'land*), 42, 49, 88n, 764, 774n, 792n, 838, 840, 841, 846, 847, 849, 850, 860, 885; at Pozières: relieves 14 Bn., 13-14 *Aug.*, 759, casualties, 5-15 *Aug.*, 770n; attacks near Mouquet Farm, 3 *Sept.*, 842-3, 853, 855-7, casualties, 858n.

**50th Battalion** (*S. Aust.*), 42, 49, 88n, 753, 758, 760 *et seq.*, 769, 774n, 839, 840, 842n, 854n, 859, 860; at Pozières: relieves 16 Bn., 12 *Aug.*, 752, attacks The Quarry, 12-13 *Aug.*, 754-7, attacks towards Mouquet Farm, 14-15 *Aug.*, 765-6, casualties, 770; during 13 Bde's attack at Mouquet Farm, 3 *Sept.*, 852-3, casualties, 858n.

**51st Battalion** (*W. Aust.*), 42, 49, 761, 762, 763, 767, 768, 769, 774n, 838 *et seq.*, 855, 880n; at Pozières: enters line, 13-14 *Aug.*, 758-9, attacks towards Mouquet Farm, 14-15 *Aug.*, 764-6, casualties, 770; attacks Mouquet Farm, 3 *Sept.*, 843-6, 850-2, casualties, 858n.

**52nd Battalion** (*S. Aust., W. Aust., Tas.*), 42, 49, 447n, 762, 838, 840, 841, 842, 860, 880n; at Pozières: casualties, 5-15 *Aug.*, 770n; attacks Mouquet Farm, 3 *Sept.*, 844-51, 853-7, command, 847n, casualties, 858n.

**53rd Battalion** (*N.S.W.*), 42, 49, 352, 353, 372, 430, 432, 435, 437n; in Battle of Fromelles (plate 367), 362, 368-71, 382-3, 384, 388, 389-90, 392, during German counter-attack, 403-5, 406 *et seq.*, 415-8, 419, casualties, 441-2; command, 447n; on Somme: relieves 55 and 56 Bns., 22 *Oct.*, 900.

**54th Battalion** (*N.S.W.*), 42, 49, 352, 353, 357, 429n, 885, 900n; command, 47, 447n; in Battle of Fromelles, 362, 368-71, 384, 388, 389,



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392, during German counter-attack, 403-4, 406, 408-9, 415-8, 419, withdraws to Aust. lines, 431-6, casualties, 442. **55th Battalion** (N.S.W.), 42, 49, 50<sup>n</sup>, 352, 883, 942<sup>n</sup>; in Battle of Fromelles, 371-2, 382, 383-4, 389, 397<sup>n</sup>, during German counter-attack, 403, 405, 406-7, 408-9, 414-7, 419-21, 429, 430, covers withdrawal of 14 Bde. to Aust. lines, 431-6, casualties, 442<sup>n</sup>; on Somme: enters line, 21 Oct., 900, 53 Bn. relieves, 22 Oct., 900, re-enters line, 30 Oct., 902. **56th Battalion** (N.S.W.), 42, 49, 50-1, 52, 352, 397<sup>n</sup>, 882; command, 47; at Battle of Fromelles, 397, during German counter-attack, 419-20, 425<sup>n</sup>, 427, 433, 435, 445<sup>n</sup>, casualties, 442<sup>n</sup>; on Somme: enters line, 20 Oct., 900, 53 Bn. relieves, 22 Oct., 900, re-enters line, 30 Oct., 902. **57th Battalion** (Vic.), 42, 49, 342, 349, 352, 440; in Battle of Fromelles, 392, 397, 398, casualties, 442<sup>n</sup>; raids German trenches near Sugar-Loaf, 19 Aug., 881. **58 Battalion** (Vic.), 42, 49, 342, 349, 352, 353, 882, 886<sup>n</sup>; Germans raid, 15 July, 344-5; in Battle of Fromelles, 392, 393, 394-5, 397, 398, 441<sup>n</sup>, casualties, 442<sup>n</sup>; command, 447<sup>n</sup>. **59th Battalion** (Vic.), 42, 49, 349, 352, 353, 885; in Battle of Fromelles, 362-7, 392 *et seq.*, casualties, 441-2; command, 447<sup>n</sup>. **60th Battalion** (Vic.), 42, 49, 118<sup>n</sup>, 349, 352, 353; command, 363, 447<sup>n</sup>; in Battle of Fromelles, 362-6, 388, 389, 393, 397, 398, 406, casualties, 441, 442. *See also* AUST. IMP. FORCE (DÉPÔTS)  
—LIGHT HORSE, 28, 32<sup>n</sup>, 52, 53, 54<sup>n</sup>, 131, 162, 163, 185, 293<sup>n</sup>, 295, 296, 297<sup>n</sup>, 300, 867, 962, 963, 965; rôle of, in Sinai and Palestine, appreciation of, 298-9; raid Turks in Jifjafa, Apr., 294; Murray's estimate of, 294; proposal to use as infantry reinforcements, 864, 866; in Senussi campaign, 1915-16, 960-3. **Brigades: 1st** (N.S.W., Q'land, S. Aust., Tas.), 15, 36<sup>n</sup>, 184<sup>n</sup>, 960; **2nd** (N.S.W., Q'land), 15, 27, 36<sup>n</sup>, 184<sup>n</sup>, 960; **3rd** (Vic., S. Aust., W. Aust.), 15, 27, 36<sup>n</sup>, 184<sup>n</sup>, 960; **4th** (N.S.W., Q'land, S. Aust.), 15, 184<sup>n</sup>; **5th** (All States), 180<sup>n</sup>, 184<sup>n</sup>. **Regiments: 2nd** (Q'land), 46, 709<sup>n</sup>; **3rd** (S. Aust., Tas.), 15, 847<sup>n</sup>; **4th** (Vic.), 91<sup>n</sup>, 298; **7th** (N.S.W.), 604<sup>n</sup>; **13th** (Vic.), 91<sup>n</sup>, 298; **I Anzac Mounted**, 925, composition, 1916, 91<sup>n</sup>. **Reserve (Training) Regiments**, 162  
—MACHINE-GUN CORPS, 41, 64; formation of companies of, 55, 64. **Companies: 1st** (N.S.W.), 139, 792<sup>n</sup>; casualties, in capture of Pozières, 593<sup>n</sup>; **2nd** (Vic.), 787<sup>n</sup>, casualties, in capture of Pozières, 593<sup>n</sup>; **3rd** (Q'land, S. Aust., W. Aust., Tas.), 597, casualties in capture of Pozières, 593<sup>n</sup>, in thrust towards Mouquet Farm,

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21-22 Aug., 797, (casualties) 802<sup>n</sup>; **4th** (All States), at Pozières, casualties, 5-15 Aug., 770<sup>n</sup>; **5th** (N.S.W.), 620<sup>n</sup>, 937<sup>n</sup>, at Pozières, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724<sup>n</sup>; **6th** (Vic.), 602, 713<sup>n</sup>, 809; at Pozières, casualties, 724<sup>n</sup>; **7th** (Q'land, S. Aust., W. Aust., Tas.), 915<sup>n</sup>, at Pozières, 603, 712, 713, 717<sup>n</sup>, in attack on O.G. Lines, 4-5 Aug., 681, 682, 690, 693-4, casualties, 25 July-7 Aug., 724<sup>n</sup>; **8th** (N.S.W., Vic., Q'land, S. Aust., W. Aust.), 437<sup>n</sup>, in Battle of Fromelles, 378<sup>n</sup>, 384, 387, 400-2, during German counter-attack, 413, 424, 425, 428, casualties, 442<sup>n</sup>; **12th** (All States), at Pozières, 713, casualties, 5-15 Aug., 770<sup>n</sup>; **13th** (Q'land, S. Aust., W. Aust., Tas.), at Pozières, casualties, 5-15 Aug., 770<sup>n</sup>, in attack on Mouquet Farm, 3-4 Sept., (casualties) 858<sup>n</sup>; **14th** (N.S.W.), in Battle of Fromelles, 382<sup>n</sup>, 436, during German counter-attack, 416, casualties, 442<sup>n</sup>; **15th** (Vic.), in Battle of Fromelles, 353, casualties, 442<sup>n</sup>. *See also* MACHINE-GUNS (AUST.) AND AUST. IMP. FORCE (DÉPÔTS)  
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—RAILWAY CORPS, 182-3. **I Anzac Light Railways**, 924  
—REMOUNT CORPS, 184  
—SALVAGE CORPS, formation of companies, 90  
—SIGNAL CORPS (Plate p. 593), 41, 517-8, 867, 960. **Divisional Signal Companies: 1st**, 40<sup>n</sup>, 518<sup>n</sup>, 590; **2nd**, 724<sup>n</sup>, 808<sup>n</sup>; **4th**, 770<sup>n</sup>; **5th**, 442<sup>n</sup>. **Wireless Signal Squadron**, for Mesopotamia, 183. **Cavalry Divisional Signal Squadron**, for Mesopotamia, 183. *See also* SIGNALING, PIGEONS  
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—TRENCH-MORTARS, formation of batteries, 90. **Light T.-M. Batteries: 1st** (N.S.W.), 593<sup>n</sup>; **2nd** (Vic.), 593<sup>n</sup>, 787<sup>n</sup>; **3rd** (Q'land, S. Aust., W. Aust., Tas.), 593<sup>n</sup>, 802<sup>n</sup>; **5th** (N.S.W.), 195, 196, 724<sup>n</sup>, 937<sup>n</sup>; **6th**

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 —TUNNELLING CORPS, 178<sup>n</sup>. **2nd Company**, 116, 210, 217<sup>n</sup>. **3rd Company**, 356, 361<sup>n</sup>  
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 AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY, 161  
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